

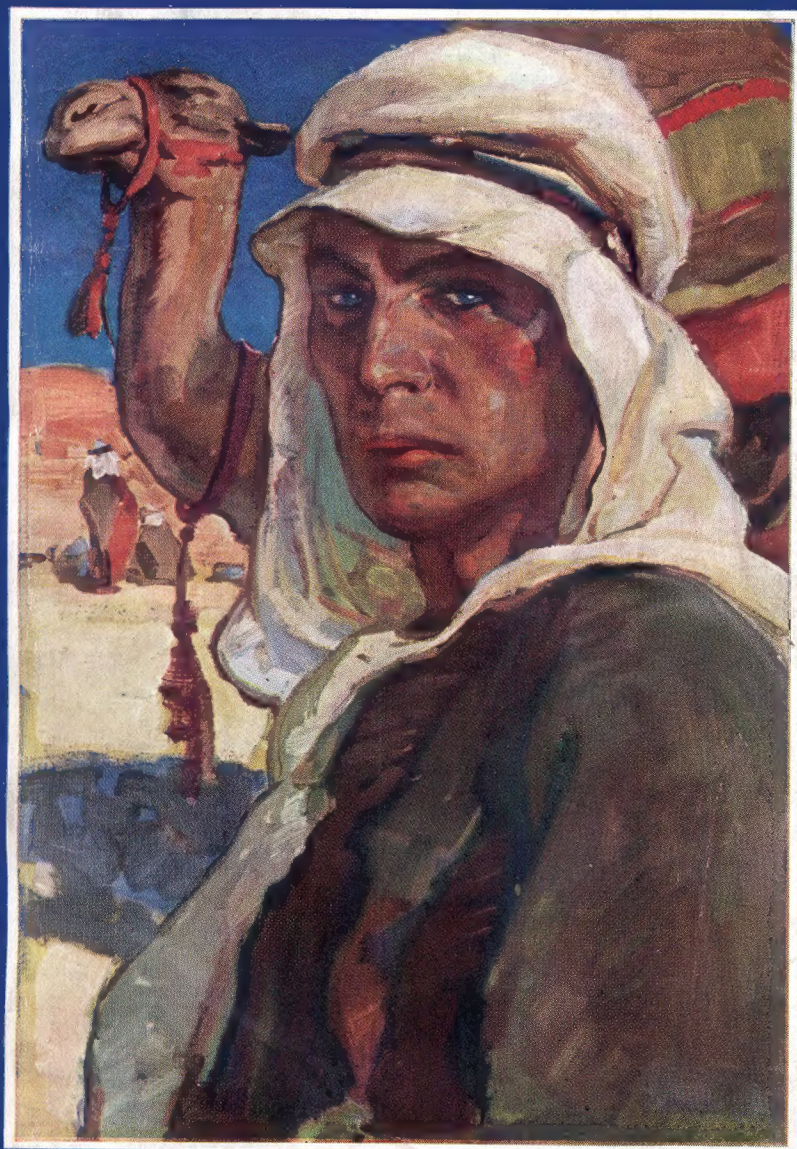
AUGUST 1937

THE BLUE BOOK MAGAZINE

VOL. 65 No. 4

BLUE BOOK

OF FICTION AND ADVENTURE



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to illustrate

"THE RETURN OF THE RED WOLF"

AUGUST

**"The
Return of the
Red Wolf"**

a new series

By **WILLIAM
J. MAKIN**

•

**"The Island
Monster"**

a novelette

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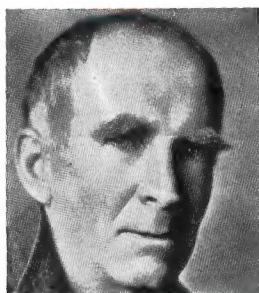
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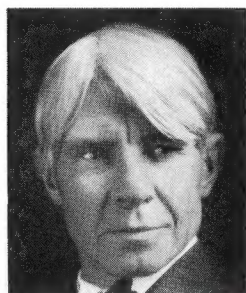


BILL ADAMS

YOU probably read Bill Adams' "My Life at Sea" in these pages last winter. Since his seafaring days he has been teamster, gardener, wood-chopper, policeman—and worked at a dozen other jobs until he became famous as the writer of sea-stories like "The Blooming Turk" in this issue.

H. BEDFORD-JONES

JUST now he's on a long journey through North Africa and Europe, getting fresh and authentic backgrounds for the two brilliant series "Ships and Men" and "Warriors in Exile" that are now appearing in each issue, and for others to follow. (According to "Who's Who in America" he was born in Canada and his full name is Henry James O'Brien Bedford-Jones.)



CARL SANDBURG

The editor of our "Made in America" department has had the rare fortune to see some of his writings like "Lincoln—the Prairie Years" and "Smoke and Steel" become library classics in his own lifetime. Poet, scholar and historian, he is also well known as a lecturer and recitalist of American folk-songs. His recent book of poems is entitled, "The People, Yes."

FULTON GRANT

MR. GRANT has had a varied experience as an officer of Marines, a professor of English in a French University, a reporter on an English newspaper in Paris, and in sundry other occupations. Since his return to America he has rapidly won favorable notice by stories like "Death Song in Spain," "The Pirate's Beard" and "The Devil Came to Our Valley." Next month he will contribute one of his best—called "Ham Band." Guess what it's about!



ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

A long training as a reporter for the New York Evening Post and later as special correspondent in Washington and elsewhere preceded Mr. Smith's career as a fiction writer. In "Porto Bello Gold" and in "Alan Breck Again" he undertook literary experiments which attracted much attention. He tells us that he got the idea for his highly imaginative "The Island Monster" in this issue, from a dream!

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BLUE BOOK



AUGUST, 1937

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The *RETURNS* of



THE five little men made their bows to the Sheik of Hamra and took their departure. It was the end of an audience granted in the ramshackle palace of a dirty and odorous port on the edge of the Red Sea. But it was the beginning of a drama which was to shake the diplomatic world.

"We will think over these matters," the bearded old Sheik had quavered. "There is always tomorrow, and I am tired."

Squatting on the royal black mattress, he had watched the five Japanese officers, smart in their khaki uniforms and their clanking big swords, bow their faces before him. Their teeth were bared in a

the RED WOLF

War looms black against the Eastern sky when an Anglo-American Intelligence officer rides in from the desert and plays his desperate lone hand.

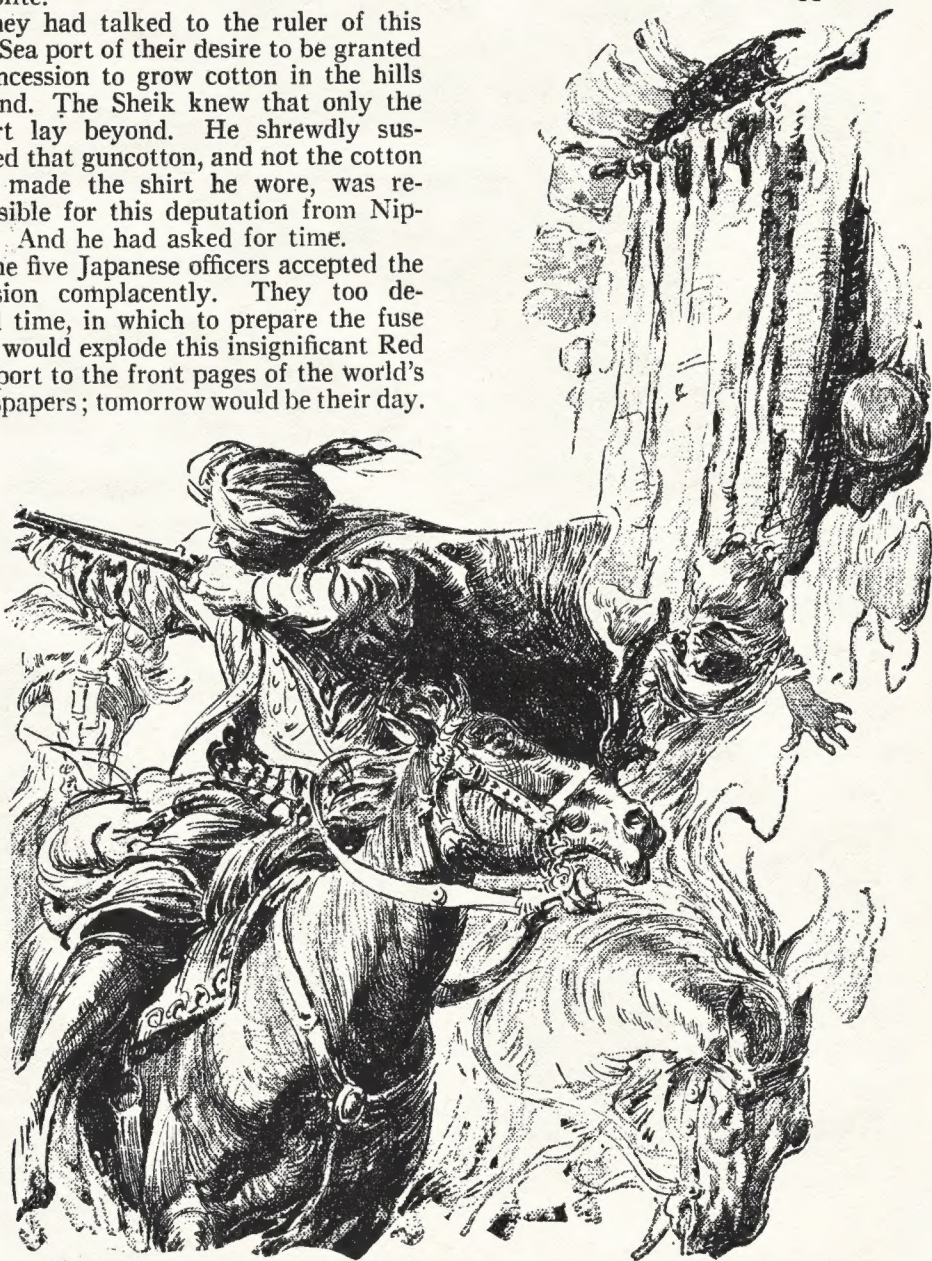
By WILLIAM J. MAKIN

Illustrated by
Austin Briggs

perpetual grin. But they were excessively polite.

They had talked to the ruler of this Red Sea port of their desire to be granted a concession to grow cotton in the hills beyond. The Sheik knew that only the desert lay beyond. He shrewdly suspected that guncotton, and not the cotton that made the shirt he wore, was responsible for this deputation from Nippon. And he had asked for time.

The five Japanese officers accepted the decision complacently. They too desired time, in which to prepare the fuse that would explode this insignificant Red Sea port to the front pages of the world's newspapers; tomorrow would be their day.



As the five little men stepped into the sun- and sand-drenched streets of the little port of Hamra, they talked rapidly among themselves—except the leader of the deputation, General Amaki, beneath whose khaki cap gray hairs were visible; there was a sad gleam in his almond eyes as he gazed at the shimmering expanse of the Red Sea.

In turn, the silent General was ignored. Deference was being paid to Captain Dorasha, of the Japanese War Office. This little man with the grinning face was a mystery hero. He disappeared and reappeared with startling rapidity. And wherever his highly polished boots trod delicately, as he now side-stepped a heap of camel-dung, trouble was the inevitable sequel. He it was who preceded the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. He had not been in Shanghai forty-eight hours before the shooting of a Japanese officer caused Japan to rush military and warships to that port to defend their rights. . . . Captain Dorasha had now been in the Arabian port of Hamra exactly twenty-four hours.

IN amiable conversation Captain Dorasha led his companions to the tall Arab house which the hospitable Sheik of Hamra had placed at the disposal of the Japanese delegation. A crazy balcony seemed to overweight the white façade.

As Dorasha stepped forward to enter the exquisitely carved doorway, a lean brown arm barred his progress.

"Alms, for the love of Allah!" whined a voice.

Looking down, the little man saw a beggar in a dirty white burnous. The hood, over which crawled flies, almost smothered the face. As the beggar stretched forth his hand, there was the clank of a chain. He was manacled to a chubby-faced Arab boy who gazed indifferently at the Japanese.

"Debtor and creditor," grinned one of the little men. "And the debtor begs, that he may be free to pay the money and be released from his chains."

"Barbarians," hissed Captain Dorasha through his clenched teeth.

With a gesture of disgust, he disappeared into the deep shade of the doorway. The four other little men followed him, their swords clanking on the stone steps. . . .

Five minutes later the little men grouped themselves on that rakish balcony. They gazed down upon the huddle of white, crumbling houses, the heaps of

camel-dung in the streets, the scrawny bodies of Arabs engaged in ablutions, and an all-pervading effluvium of decay. Beneath them, dozing like dumb beasts in the sunshine, were the chained debtor and creditor.

"So this is Hamra!" said one of the little men.

"I have been in worse places," nodded Captain Dorasha, his eyes narrowed to slits as he took in every detail of the scene before him. "There was Manchuria, for example. And the upper reaches of the Yangtze—places where even pariah dogs could not live."

"Yet the reports we received of Hamra are correct," said another officer. He had a pair of binoculars and was scanning the coast-line and the Red Sea beyond. "Once the coral reef is breached, there should be anchorage for ten warships. And those headlands would make impregnable fortresses. Yes, it is indeed worthy of our attention."

"What do you think of it, General Amaki?" asked Dorasha. There was a touch of irony in the question. General Amaki, the last to put in an appearance on that balcony, had his gaze toward the distant horizon. Although his teeth were bared in the conventional grin, the sadness was still in his eyes.

"You heard me, General!" repeated Dorasha peremptorily. "What do you think of it?"

With a start, General Amaki recovered himself. He gazed at the dirt-smeared alleys beneath.

"It will suffice," he said, with a quiet dignity. Then he turned his back upon the group and walked into the room that gave upon the balcony.

WITHIN the next few hours, events moved swiftly to the drama which was to shake the diplomatic world. Yet in the hot, sand-drenched port of Hamra, life moved at the slow pace of a dying camel. It seemed but another day of decay. There were the same somnolent groups of Arabs in the coffee-houses. The flies swarmed upon the sweetmeats, and the loungers in the coffee-shops were too indifferent to brush the pests away.

They talked listlessly. One man, however, apparently as somnolent as the rest, listened intently. A filthy burnous, which helped protect him from the flies, almost covered his face. Occasionally he roused to sip lazily at his cup of coffee. But in the space of two hours he had learned of all that had been said in the



"Alms, for the love of Allah!" whined a beggar's voice. . . .
"Barbarians!" Captain Dorasha hissed.

audience between the Sheik of Hamra and the five little men.

At length he yawned, stretched himself and after flinging a coin on the table, shuffled away. He passed slowly through the street of coffee-merchants, chaffered over the price of a piece of rotting fish, and gleaned more talk of the strange doings of the five little men. He also saw the glint of gold in one brown palm, gold that had come from far-off Nippon.

Reflectively, he came to the sea front and slowly sidled to the house of the Japanese. There he looked for a moment over his shoulder, and plunged into the deep shadows. There was the clank of a chain. A moment later he emerged, a boy at the other end of the chain. The

couple took up their former position by the decorated doorway.

"Something is going to happen, Abdul, very soon," murmured the man who an hour ago had been drinking coffee.

"Will there be fighting, master?" asked the boy, his eyes eager.

"Much fighting and bloodshed," said the other quietly. His hand crept to the burnous and twitched it farther over his head. For a second there had been a glimpse of red hair.

"There is only one of the little men in the house," said Abdul. "The old one."

"General Amaki. The Sheik said he saw death in the old man's eyes. I wonder."

And once again he thrust out his hand in a plaintive appeal for alms.

AT that moment three of the khaki-clad Japanese were seated in the heavily carpeted room of an Indian coffee-merchant of Hamra. They were enjoying the rare delicacy of tea, served in china cups by the cunning Nabbi Baksh. The Indian was fat and gross. His body moved slowly, but his mind moved fast. He, seated on his coffee-bags, which he hoped soon would be bags of gold, had lured the little men to Hamra.

It was his report, together with details furnished by a Japanese traveler in cheap shirts, that had started a military and naval conference in Tokio with officers grouped around a map of the Red Sea. They saw in Hamra a possible outpost of Nippon, a fortress on the way to Europe, and one that challenged both Aden and the Suez Canal. It overlooked the trade-route to the Far East. A telegram in code was dispatched to Manchuria with a command to Captain Dorasha to return at once to Tokio.

Simultaneously there was a distressing scandal caused by the relationship between a general and a geisha girl. The general had made a fool of himself. Military circles were agog with the story. A whisper reached the Emperor. A few days later a downcast General Amaki was taken under military escort to the War Office in Tokio. He asked that he might be allowed to make the supreme sacrifice. The military tribunal decided. General Amaki was treated with great politeness, well fed, allowed to meditate, but carefully guarded.

On such little incidents do the big affairs of the world hinge. The three little men were draining their cups of tea and smacking their lips with noisy gusto,

when Captain Dorasha entered the room of the Indian merchant. Promptly the three other men rose to their feet and clicked their heels smartly.

"All is prepared," said Dorasha briefly. "It will happen with the setting of the sun."

"And the Imperial sun will rise!" ejaculated one of the little men.

Dorasha nodded. He unstrapped his belt, which held a holster with a service revolver in it. He held it before the three men.

"Who will make the call upon the honorable General Amaki?" he asked.

Each man stepped forward.

"I choose you, Lieutenant Buichiro," he said to the middle man. "You will go at once to the house. You understand what is to be done?"

"Yes, Captain."

"As soon as the affair is settled, rejoin us here."

The man saluted smartly, and left the room.

"I think I should like some tea," said Captain Dorasha, grinning in the direction of the Indian merchant. . . .

It was but ten minutes before sunset when the whining beggar with the chained boy was aware of the approach of a solitary khaki-clad little man. It was Lieutenant Buichiro, without his sword, but with a revolver-holster strapped to his waist.

"Alms, for the love of Allah!"

THE officer ignored the beggar. He passed through the doorway and into the silence of the house. He mounted the staircase, and entered a room roughly furnished in the European style. General Amaki was seated at a table, reading a rice-paper volume. He looked up at the interruption. His face was tinged with an ivory pallor. The sad eyes gleamed.

Lieutenant Buichiro saluted smartly.

"By order of the Heavenly Emperor," he said coldly. "He bids you make your peace with Gozenzo-sama, the spirits of honorable ancestors."

General Amaki rose.

"I thank the Heavenly Emperor," he said, saluting in his turn. "I am happy to prove myself a true descendant of the Samurai. *Banzai!*"

"*Banzai!*" repeated the lieutenant.

Then with a quick gesture he drew forth the service revolver and placed it on the table. This done, he saluted once again, turned on his heel and left the

room. He left the General staring sadly at the dull weapon before him.

A minute later Lieutenant Buichiro emerged into the street. He stepped delicately among the heaps of camel-dung, and turned the corner.

"The moment has come!" murmured the beggar, fumbling with the chain.

Even as he spoke, there was a panic eruption. Yells were heard in the distance. A group of Arabs on horseback came galloping along the street. They carried old-fashioned rifles in their hands, and as their lather-flanked beasts came alongside the doorway, the riders fired their rifles recklessly in the air.

A few somnolent coffee-drinkers awoke with a start and scurried for shelter. A woman's scream was heard. There was a wild flurry of dust through which could be glimpsed the frenzied brown faces of the riders. Much yelling, and then the group of madmen disappeared in the distance.

Silence began to settle like the dust. A mangy dog peeped forth fearfully from a doorway. A coffee-drinker blinked blearily from beneath a table. And then, in the sudden hush that had fallen, came the single report of a shot.

It came from the house outside which the beggar had slept during the night. The beggar himself was, at that moment, leaping up the stairs. He burst into the room which Lieutenant Buichiro had left

a few moments ago. Lying on the floor was General Amaki, dying. A strange peace had come to those sad eyes. There was a whisper on his lips. The beggar bent down.

"*Banzai!*" murmured General Amaki—and died. . . .

Ten minutes later the beggar, mounted on a fast racing-camel, had left the port of Hamra behind him, and was riding swiftly into the desert.

FIVE o'clock the following evening: For twenty-four hours the four little men had been as active as gnawing mice, in the white house that leaned toward the Red Sea.

They had been prompt in their official protest to the Sheik of Hamra of the foul murder of their honorable leader General Amaki. It was obvious that a group of drunken fanatical Arabs, part of the Sheik's bodyguard, had galloped toward the house firing rifles and yelling. One of their shots had killed General Amaki.

That shot was now reverberating round the world. Even as the body of General Amaki, draped in the flag of the Rising Sun, had been carried to burial in that Arabian port, officials in Tokio had issued a guarded statement. A brief report



"*Banzai!*" murmured General Amaki—and died.

of the incident was followed by the curt announcement that the cruiser *Yamasaka*, then in the Indian Ocean, had been ordered to proceed at once to Hamra to insure the safety of the other Japanese members of the delegation.

THE repercussions were instant. The New York newspapers, with an acute understanding of Oriental diplomacy, saw something highly suspicious in the incident. In Europe, the newspapers revealed their alarm in big headlines. They realized that Japan was about to bid for an outpost in the Middle East. Italy saw a direct threat to her colony of Eritrea on the other side of the Red Sea. France considered it the first step of Japan toward Europe. In London it was rumored that the Admiralty had wireless instructions to the East India Squadron.

Not since Agadir had the great powers been so agitated in their chancelleries and diplomatic circles. There was every evidence that a *coup d'état* had been accomplished. And even the diplomats saw no way out of the *impasse*, or any means to prevent that cruiser's reaching Hamra and elevating her guns toward the wretched conglomeration of Arab houses.

Dimly conscious of this international upset, Captain Dorasha, however, was for the moment worried over a piece of paper he held in his hand. He questioned Lieutenant Buichiro.

"You are certain that when you came back to the house and found the dead body of the honorable General, there was no trace of the revolver?"

"Not a sign, Captain. It had completely disappeared."

"You searched in the street, below the balcony? The General might have flung it out of the window. He would realize that it would add truth to the story we are telling the world."

Lieutenant Buichiro shook his black thatch.

"I groveled in the camel-dung, Captain, but could find no trace of the revolver."

"There was that beggar, chained to his creditor," recalled Dorasha quickly. "If he saw that revolver fall into the street, he would seize it like a pariah dog after a bone."

"I recall, Captain, that he was in the doorway when I called upon the General with the message from the Heavenly Emperor."

Captain Dorasha reflected.

"The revolver must have been flung forth, and the beggar seized it—to sell in the bazaar for what it would bring. Well, there is no danger in that. Yet some one entered this house in our absence, and wrote this letter. Can you remember, Buichiro, whether it was on the table when you handed the honorable General the revolver?"

Buichiro was doubtful.

"I cannot remember it, Captain. I only know the letter was there on the table, addressed to yourself, when I came back to find the honorable General dead on the floor."

Dorasha read the letter for the tenth time. It was brief:

Dear Captain Dorasha:

I have heard of your presence in the Yemen. I have also heard of your remarkable exploits in Manchuria. I feel that we ought to meet. In fact, I insist upon it. I shall have the honor of calling upon you for dinner tomorrow evening at seven o'clock.

*Yours faithfully,
Paul Rodgers.*

"The tone is friendly," mused Captain Dorasha, "but there is the suspicion of a challenge in it."

"This Paul Rodgers—is he really of importance?" inquired Buichiro.

"A man I have often wanted to meet," said Dorasha. "Even in Manchuria I have heard of the famous Paul Rodgers—it is said that the natives hereabouts call him the Red Wolf of Arabia. One of the Intelligence Service, like ourselves. American-born and -educated, it is reported, but took service with the British because their wide-flung empire offered a better opportunity in his chosen career. He has played a dramatic part in every diplomatic upheaval in these parts during the past years. A greater man, I understand, than Lawrence of Arabia, for he is not cursed with the self-doubt, the torturing self-analysis which drove Lawrence into obscurity."

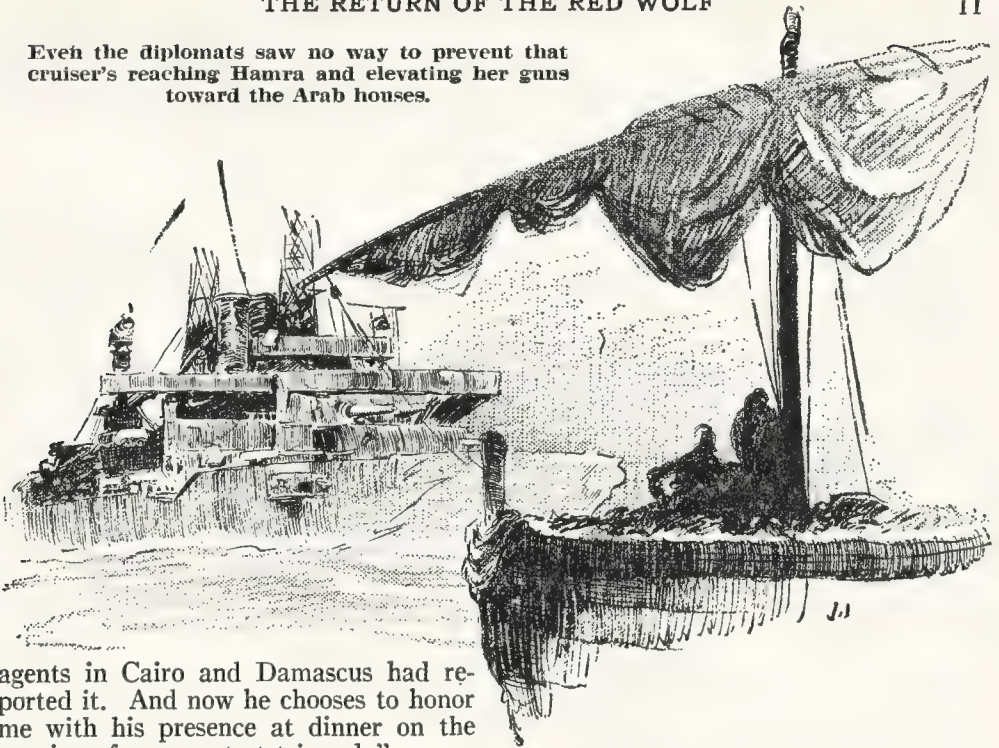
"But not so great a man as Captain Dorasha, surely," ventured one of the little men.

"You honor me, my friends," smiled Dorasha. "That remains to be seen. We shall meet him this evening at dinner."

"Then you accept?"

"Of course. Why not? I am anxious to learn why this mysterious Anglo-American Intelligence man has been hiding in the desert for a year. There have been reports that he was dead. Even our

Even the diplomats saw no way to prevent that cruiser's reaching Hamra and elevating her guns toward the Arab houses.



agents in Cairo and Damascus had reported it. And now he chooses to honor me with his presence at dinner on the evening of our greatest triumph."

"The cruiser *Yamaska* will arrive at anchor just beyond the coral reefs at eight-thirty in the evening, Captain. We established contact by radio from the house of the Indian coffee-merchant, half an hour after the murder of General Amaki."

The little man who spoke was obviously proud of the technical achievement. He grinned openly with his teeth.

"Excellent," nodded Dorasha. "I confess that I shall feel a little more comfortable when the eight-inch guns of the *Yamaska* are pointing in the direction of the palace of the Sheik of Hamra."

NOT that Captain Dorasha was without courage. He had showed spirit when, immediately after the finding of the dead General Amaki, he had marched alone to the palace and insisted upon an immediate audience with the Sheik.

To the watery-eyed Sheik, he had been blunt and forceful. A distinguished Japanese general, leader of a diplomatic delegation, had been brutally murdered in the Sheik's domains. There could be no doubt that it was a premeditated affair. A group of Arab soldiers, obviously of the Sheik's bodyguard, had galloped into the street, firing rifles and shrieking against the yellow devils. Unfortunately for them, only the one Japanese was in the house at the time—General Amaki. He had bravely endeavored to defend

himself. But he had been shot down ruthlessly.

The Sheik had listened like a tired old man to the story. After the outrage had been described, he expressed his deep regrets. The brave Captain Dorasha, however, was laboring under an illusion. The hospitality of the Arab was such that when it had been granted, a visitor was as safe as under his own roof. There was obviously a mistake in the story.

"There is no mistake," Dorasha had snapped. "And on behalf of the Heavenly Emperor, I demand satisfaction and compensation for this brutal murder of a Japanese gentleman. Already the news has reached a Japanese cruiser in the Indian Ocean, and she is steaming toward Hamra to emphasize our demands for compensation."

"And may I ask what those demands are?" the Sheik had quavered.

It was then that Captain Dorasha had handed over the carefully prepared document—actually drawn up months previously. It called upon the Sheik to make such concessions to Japan as would satisfy national honor for the disgraceful murder.

Those concessions were carefully worded. It would give Japan complete suzerainty over the port of Hamra, to develop its natural possibilities as a commission of Nipponese might think fit. The reign of the Sheik of Hamra was safeguarded until his death. At the same

time, even the official phraseology left no doubt that he would be but a puppet ruler.

The Sheik had fumbled the document in his gnarled brown hands.

"I will read it at leisure," he had said. "I feel very tired."

"I shall call for my answer in twenty-four hours," said Dorasha bluntly.

He had left the palace with the Sheik placing red and white chessmen on the board, and asking querulously for Afiz.

"And now let us prepare to receive the cruiser *Yamaska*," said Captain Dorasha to his three compatriots in the house that overlooked the Red Sea. "And also prepare a dinner worthy of this mysterious Paul Rodgers."

FIVE minutes to seven: Dorasha gazed round the room with satisfaction. It was prepared as if for a celebration. Where a few hours ago the body of General Amaki had lain draped with the flag, was now a table laid in European fashion for five guests. Lighted candles and lamps lent a festive air to the scene. The flag of the Rising Sun now draped the wall. Two Arab servants waited expectantly.

"Do you think this white man, Paul Rodgers, will dare to come to our feast?" asked Lieutenant Buichiro.

"This evening," Rodgers had said, "my warriors from the desert took up strategic positions, each as I ordered."

"If what I have heard told of him is true," said Dorasha, "he most certainly will."

Even as he spoke, there was a loud knocking at the doorway below. At a sign from Dorasha one of the Arabs went to answer the summons. The four little men grouped themselves expectantly. They heard talk in Arabic, footsteps mounting the stairs. The door opened.

A slim, sunburned man in the pure white garb of an Arabian chief stood before them. A keen, ascetic face with searching gray eyes regarded them. With a quick gesture, the newcomer flung back the hood of his burnous, revealing a smooth crop of red hair. Without hesitation he advanced toward Captain Dorasha and bowed.

"Permit me to introduce myself, Captain Dorasha. I am Paul Rodgers."

The voice was level and firm.

Dorasha bowed in turn.

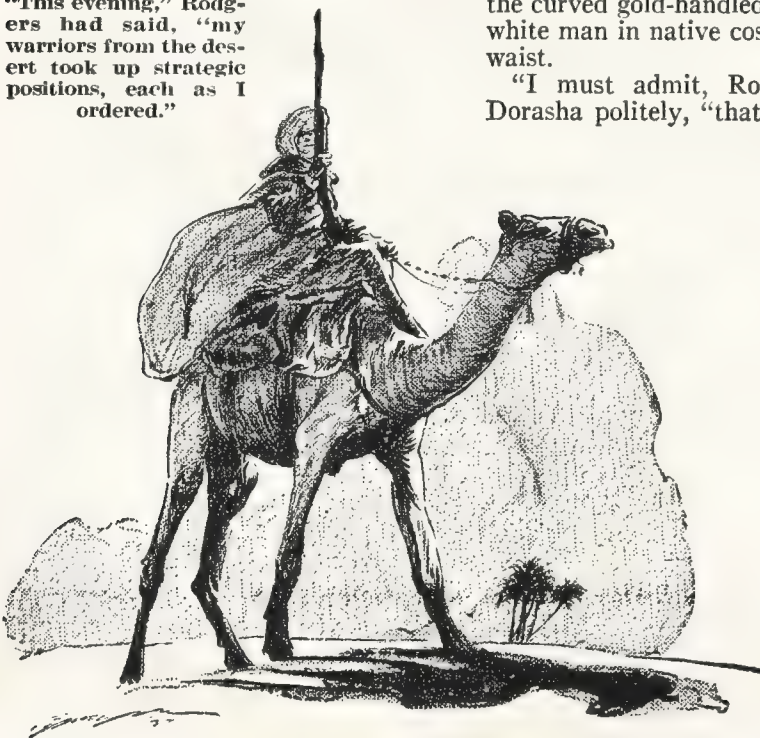
"This is indeed a great honor, Rodgers. I have long desired to make your acquaintance."

Something like a grim smile crossed the firm lips.

"The desire is mutual, Dorasha. Your own exploits in Manchuria are not unknown. I must apologize for inviting myself to a dinner which, it would seem, is in the nature of a celebration."

The gray eyes were searching the room closely. Dorasha's gaze was fixed upon the curved gold-handled knife which this white man in native costume wore at his waist.

"I must admit, Rodgers," went on Dorasha politely, "that your self-invita-



tion came in an unusual manner and, may I say, at an unusual moment."

"I ought to have realized," said Rodgers with equal politeness, "that you were exceptionally busy and—er—preoccupied."

"Perhaps I was," Dorasha said guardedly. "But the business is now settled, or about to be settled. Consequently you find me at my ease and ready to offer you such miserable hospitality as this poor house can command."

"I am delighted to hear it," murmured Rodgers.

"Permit me to introduce my colleagues," went on Dorasha easily. "This is Lieutenant Buichiro—" A clicking of heels from the little men, and a bow to each from Paul Rodgers, and the introductions were effected. "And now, perhaps, a cocktail?"

"A delightful surprise," agreed Rodgers, taking the Martini that was offered him. "May I venture upon a toast?"

"Do, please. You are the guest of honor."

"To the success of the evening!" declared Rodgers, raising his glass.

"To the success of the evening," repeated the little men; and they drained their glasses.

Rodgers took his seat at the table. The little men politely followed. With their keen, oblique eyes they scrutinized this strange personality of the Middle East, the man who was known as the Red Wolf of Arabia. The red hair intrigued them. It was the color of the fox, that sacred animal of Japan worshiped because of its cleverness, its cunning. But the similitude warned them also, and they were on their guard. They bared their teeth in disarming smiles.

But this man Paul Rodgers had poise. He talked easily and pleasantly. He conversed with them as equals. His mind ranged over a variety of topics, but carefully avoided politics. As each in turn spoke to him, those gray eyes were turned toward the speaker with a disconcerting intentness. The gaze seemed to probe the smiling masks. They in turn were baffled by the broad smooth brow tanned by the Arabian sun.

THE dinner proceeded, and was savored in epicure fashion by Rodgers. He sipped champagne from his glass with appreciation. The four Japanese watched the slim fingers curl round the stem of the glass like taut wires. He did not hesitate to praise his host.

"I assure you, Dorasha, that this is the best dinner I've had for twelve months," he said.

Dorasha leaned forward.

"My poor efforts have met with unexpected success," he said politely; then: "Have you been lost to civilization these twelve months, Rodgers?"

The man in Arab dress smiled, disarmingly.

"It depends, my dear Dorasha, on what you call civilization. I admit I have exiled myself from luxuries."

"It was reported that you were dead," persisted his host. "I need not say how grieved I was to hear such news."

"Then, of course, my sudden appearance in Hamra must have indeed been a surprise to you," murmured the guest.

"A delightful surprise," averred the smiling mask. "But where have you been, Rodgers?"

The Anglo-American dismissed the soufflé with a gesture.

"I have been living in the desert, my dear Dorasha. The life of a Bedouin."

"A strange existence. Maybe there was a purpose in it?"

"Is there not a purpose in all our doings?" asked the Red Wolf disarmingly. "Surely *you* appreciate that, my friend, after your disappearances and reappearances in Manchuria."

"I serve my country, and the Heavenly Emperor," said Dorasha quietly.

"No man can do more—except serve his own soul," smiled Rodgers.

A SMALL carafe of white rice wine, *sake*, was proffered. Rodgers accepted and sipped slowly.

"For a Bedouin," said Dorasha, "if I might be so presumptuous, you seem distinctly regal."

"I am a chieftain," replied the Red Wolf simply. "I command a thousand brave warriors, men who live by the sword and who desire nothing better than to die by the sword."

"The spirit of the old Samurai of Nippon," nodded Dorasha. "It exists even today."

"So I am told," said Rodgers, sipping his wine. "It is said that a gentleman of Japan who has sullied his honor may even find an honorable way out—in death by *hara-kiri*."

"I see that you are well acquainted with our customs," bowed Dorasha.

"Yes, I have even seen *hara-kiri* committed," said the Red Wolf quietly, a queer gleam in his gray eyes.

"But is it possible?" asked Dorasha in polite astonishment. "The sacred and honorable rites of *hara-kiri* can be performed only when the victim is assured of solitude."

Rodgers drained his glass of *sake*.

"I saw a man commit *hara-kiri*—suicide, at any rate—in this room, yesterday," he said sternly. "It will be my eternal regret that I was too late to save him."

The four little men rose to their feet. Their faces were no longer smiling. Paul Rodgers continued to sit there, toying with the empty glass. There was an apparent nonchalance in his manner which was disconcerting. It was Dorasha who broke the short silence.

"Am I to understand, Rodgers, that you are referring to the death of our honorable leader General Amaki?"

Rodgers nodded.

"A brave man, Dorasha. He died for Japan—by his own hand. *Hara-kiri* in effect, even though he did not use a sword."

"It's a lie," hissed Dorasha. "He was murdered by those crazy fanatical Arabs who galloped past this house."

With a quick gesture Rodgers fumbled in his white robes and brought forth a service revolver. He laid it on the table. The little men gazed at it, fascinated.

"This is the weapon which killed General Amaki," said Paul Rodgers. "Fired by his own hand. Only one shot. I thought you might like to have it back, Dorasha. It belongs to you, if I'm not mistaken."

CAPTAIN DORASHA leaned toward the white-robed figure.

"Rodgers, I am not to be bluffed by such a tale. I tell you General Amaki was shot by an Arab. The whole world has heard of the murder, with horror."

Rodgers continued to toy with his glass.

"I am afraid the whole world will have to learn the true story, my friend. Oh, yes, Dorasha. I know your methods. Clever, but with the one fault of repetition. It was you who arranged the invasion of Manchuria. A party of Japanese soldiers guarding the railway outside Mukden are fired on. Reprisals follow, and the Japanese army marches. A few months later you are in Shanghai: a Japanese officer is shot. Once again the war of conquest begins. You repeat yourself, Dorasha. I find myself rather ashamed of you as an Intelligence officer.

In Europe, you would be regarded merely as an *agent provocateur*."

Captain Dorasha winced at the remark. His Oriental politeness was fast disappearing.

"You are a bold talker, Rodgers."

"And also a man of action, Dorasha, even though I have been philosophizing in the desert. I heard that you were on your way to visit the Sheik of Hamra. I decided to greet you on arrival. The chained debtor and creditor whom you dismissed as barbarians were myself and my assistant Abdul."

"So you also play the jackal!"

"I spent an inhospitable night on your doorstep. I also saw the group of Arabs gallop past the house, firing their rifles. A brave show, Dorasha, but staged by yourself. I even joined those fellows for a time in the coffee-houses where they spent the gold that you had distributed among them."

THREE of the little men had gone to a corner of the room and taken up their swords. Dorasha stretched out a hand and took up the pistol from the table. Still the Red Wolf did not move. He remained seated at the table, his sun-burned face more inscrutable than the watchful Oriental faces coming toward him.

"You have chosen to speak frankly of my methods," said Dorasha, with the little remaining suavity he possessed. "I must compliment you, Paul Rodgers, on your strategy. But you have entered upon the scene too late. Within the next five minutes I expect the cruiser *Yamaska* to announce her arrival off Hamra by the firing of a gun salute. Then, accompanied by naval officers, I shall proceed to the palace and demand compensation for the murder of a Japanese gentleman."

"Even so," said Paul Rodgers, "I'm afraid your *coup d'état* will fail."

"Because you are the one witness of a Japanese general's shooting himself?" laughed Dorasha. "Really, my dear Rodgers, you underestimate me. The body of General Amaki is already in the earth. And believe me, I have only to give the word, and my colleagues here would make certain that you are laid at the side of the General."

Rodgers rose, and smiled.

"I even believe you would go as far as that," he said.

"I would go to any lengths to fulfill my mission," said Dorasha sternly. "And now, Rodgers—"

In the distance sounded the loud boom of a gun. The little men jerked themselves to attention. Instinctively they crowded to the balcony and gazed toward the blackness of the Red Sea. Another boom. Then a searchlight knifed the darkness.

"The cruiser *Yamaska*," shouted Dorasha. "Come here, Rodgers, and gaze upon history in the making. Hamra will soon be an outpost of Japan."

With a quiet, lithe movement of his athletic body, Paul Rodgers joined the four little men on the crazy balcony. Even as he did so, rifles burst out in the darkness of the town. They seemed to come from the palace.

"Fools!" cried Dorasha. "Already these barbarians are panic-stricken. In their scared hearts they realize that Nippon has triumphed. Hand me the binoculars, Buichiro. It might be possible to see the *Yamaska* launching a boat."

He stared intently through the glasses. Rodgers lit another cigarette and seemed to be enjoying the night air.

"Yes, the boat is launched," decided Dorasha. "It is now my duty to go to the beach and meet them. Then we shall proceed to the palace."

"But why the palace?" asked Rodgers.

"Because there I shall demand of the Sheik of Hamra, satisfaction for the murder of General Amaki," said Dorasha triumphantly.

Paul Rodgers smiled.

"There is no need to go to the palace for the Sheik of Hamra," he said.

"Has the old fool fled? All the better!"

"On the contrary, the Sheik of Hamra is here, in this house."

"Here?"

Rodgers nodded.

"I am the Sheik of Hamra." He made a slight bow to the astonished men. "Yes, you have every right to be surprised. It only happened half an hour ago, when I was enjoying your delectable dinner. I did not come to Hamra alone, this evening. I brought with me my thousand warriors from the desert. They took up strategic positions, each as I ordered; they stole upon the palace and the town while we were sipping *sake*. Those few sporadic shots you heard—they announced to me that my men had triumphed, and that I was the new Sheik of Hamra."

DORASHA'S eyes narrowed to slits during this quiet recital by the man in the white robes of an Arab chief. He saw the relentless truth in that ascetic

face. With an oath he jerked forth the revolver that had killed General Amaki, and leveled it at the Red Wolf of Arabia.

"Then you will not live long as the Sheik of Hamra, my dear Rodgers," he hissed, all pretense of courtesy gone. "For before that boat from the *Yamaska* is beached, you will be a dead man."

RODGERS stroked the back of his flaming crop with a characteristic gesture.

"That, I am afraid, would be too big a *coup d'état* even for you, Dorasha, to attempt."

"Really!" sneered Dorasha, his finger curving on the trigger. "I presume you imagine that just because you are Paul Rodgers, 'the Red Wolf of Arabia,' your death will cause consternation in the diplomatic world."

"Not because I am Paul Rodgers," was the quiet reply, "but because I am the representative of His Majesty's Britannic Government in Hamra. And—before you pull the trigger, my friend—I have to tell you that you are no longer in Arabia, but on British soil. You are, in fact, the honored guests of the British administration of the port of Hamra."

He bowed to each of the Japanese in turn.

"It's a lie!" declared Dorasha.

"You have only to notice the searchlight from your visiting cruiser," said Rodgers calmly. "There! It is shining on the palace now. Very clear, is it not? Please observe the flag which is flying above the palace: the Union Jack. Yes, gentlemen. I and my Arab force took possession of this town an hour ago in the name of his Majesty King George. . . . And now, Dorasha, I will accompany you to the beach and do the honors to your visiting naval friends. We shall have pleasant company. Two cruisers from the British East India Squadron are due at dawn."

Captain Dorasha realized he was beaten. So did the other little men. They eyed the slim figure in the white burnous who had upset their carefully planned strategy. There was hatred in their oblique eyes. In all of them, except Dorasha's. Even in defeat, he must admire the man who had circumvented him.

"I congratulate you, Rodgers," he said coldly, and turning on his heel, he left the room. His compatriots followed him.

Rodgers was left alone. He stared at the empty glasses on the disordered table, the sad remains of what was meant

THE RETURN OF THE RED WOLF

to be a celebration. Almost he visualized the ghost of General Amaki there, a whisper on his lips.

"*Banzai!*"

It was not a whisper, but a shout. It came from the beach. Rodgers strode to the balcony and gazed down. He saw the four Nipponese greeting a naval cutter that was coming to the shore. One of the little men, Captain Dorasha, stood there. It was he who had shouted the greeting.

Some one held aloft a flaring torch. In that flickering light Rodgers saw Dorasha side-step into the darkness. At the same time there came a shot. The revolver that had killed General Amaki had been fired again.

"*Hara-kiri*—modern style!" muttered Paul Rodgers. "The honorable way out of defeat. There was spirit in Dorasha."

Two hours later the Japanese cruiser *Yamaska* was steaming toward the Indian Ocean. Nearing Aden, she answered the signals of two cruisers of the East India Squadron, steaming in the direction of Hamra. The news laconically transmitted from the *Yamaska* considerably startled the British admiral, who was just preparing for the night. He spluttered his annoyance.

"Some damned Arab chief has raided Hamra and raised the British flag there," he growled. "A nice kettle of bother we're steaming into. Wonder who the devil has stuck his finger into this stew?"

"Seems to have eased the situation, anyhow, sir," commented the Flag Lieutenant. "Our Japanese friends have withdrawn pretty quickly."

"Yes, I suppose so," grunted the Admiral. "But flying the British flag over that damned dirty port! Somebody has a nerve."

"We shall learn all about it tomorrow, sir," soothed the Flag Lieutenant.

But when the two cruisers anchored off Hamra in the dawn, they were surprised to find the flag of the Sheik of Hamra fluttering over the palace. Moreover, a dhow brought forth a crimson-clad Arab who announced that his old master, the holy Sheik of Hamra, welcomed with friendship the arrival of the British warships. . . .

And far away in the desert, a white-robed chieftain led his warriors toward their home in a distant oasis.

His lean ascetic face had a smile of quiet triumph upon it.

Another spirited story by William J. Makin will be a feature of our next issue.

Johnny Hood plays a poor hand well in this vivid drama of the old West.

By LUKE
SHORT

Illustrated by
Paul Chapman

The Ivory

WHEN the house man came to take over Johnny Hood's faro bank during the supper-hour, he walked into a row. The faro lookout, from his high stool behind the dealer, both hands on his shotgun, was addressing a player over the head of Johnny Hood:

"Reckon you've snaked off about enough sleepers, mister. You better let that one ride."

The man addressed was burly, a head taller than any man around him, and his handsome middle-aged face was webbed with lines of dissipation. His black and predatory eyes were mocking, filled with a sardonic humor, as he raised his gaze to the lookout.

"Talkin' to me?"

"I am," the lookout said grimly.

The big man smiled. "When I get to the place where I've got to snake sleepers, I'll give up faro."

"Then it's time to quit," the look-out said, raising his gun a little.

The big man, still smiling, appealed to Johnny Hood, whose forehead was beaded with tiny drops of sweat. Nothing else gave Johnny Hood away, for his ragged gray mustache covered his mouth, and his gnarled and work-worn hands shook a little all the time.

"Was that my bet, dealer?" the big man asked Johnny.

Johnny raised his head and craned his neck to look up at the shotgun guard. "It's all right, Roy. That was his stack, right enough."

"Okay," the lookout said; for a dealer's word was law at a faro-table. He leaned back in his stool and the gun rested on his lap. "No offense meant," he said quietly to the big man.



Butt Plate

"No offense taken. Only be careful."

In a minute, Johnny handed over to the house man, and weaved his way through the jammed barroom toward the front. He wiped his face with a handkerchief, and all the while his glance roved the room, for he was looking for some one. At the front end of the bar, he saw him,—Rome Dietz, the owner,—and he worked his slow way to him.

Facing his boss, Johnny said: "You got a minute, Rome?"

Rome Dietz had a harried look. The racket of his barroom, its smoke, its reek, its talk, roared into the six o'clock swing, and it was pandemonium.

"Come in the office," he shouted to Johnny, scuttling into his office behind the window end of the bar with celerity.

JOHNNY closed the door behind them; Rome walked to the curtained front window and paused, observing the street. It was quiet in here; out there, the street was a tangle of Conestoga wagons, of saddle-horses, of freight-wagons, of buggies, of cursing drunken prospectors, of riders, of punchers, of women, of kids, of every known kind of horse-drawn vehicle, of every known kind of camp-follower.

"My God, would you look at that!" Rome murmured, without turning around. "And to think that a week ago I used to sleep from two to six in a chair outside this window."

He turned to face Johnny. "I don't like it," he added with a sigh. "Money, or no money, I don't like it."

Johnny cleared his throat, and ran a hand through his graying hair. A little of his uneasiness was communicated to Rome, who gazed at him curiously.

Johnny said simply: "I want to quit, Rome." Now that it was out, he lost some of his diffidence. His was a middle-aged seamed face, now that it was calmer. Only his eyes gave a clue to the former man; and by them a close observer would have deduced that this was a man in whom hope was nearly dead.

"Why?" Rome asked.

"I dunno. I'm too old for the job, I reckon."

"Aimin' to head for the new gold-camp, Johnny?"

Johnny simply shook his head.

"Don't I pay you enough?"

"Plenty."

"Then what's wrong?"

"I just want to pull out."

Rome walked over to his desk and settled his huge bulk into the chair.

"You aint so young, Johnny."

"I know. Too old to bank faro."

"Your boy aint so big or so strong he can hold down a man's job."

"I know."

Rome looked up, his face appealing. "Dammit, Johnny, I don't like this any better than you. But what can we do?"

"I can move."

Rome sighed. "Take a couple days to think it over. Maybe you'll get used to it. A man can't spend six years in a little one-horse town like this listenin' to the clock tick, and not feel strange when they lay a gold-camp right down in his lap."

"All right. But I'll quit Saturday, I reckon," Johnny said. He put a hand on the door, and looked obliquely, almost apologetically, at Rome.

"What's the real reason, Johnny?" Rome asked quietly.

"I told you."

There was a moment of indecision, during which neither spoke; then Johnny let himself out. He stood beside the door, seeming to gather his strength. But he was thinking of Rome. How could he tell Rome that the real reason for his wanting to leave Pinal Tanks was that anonymity was no longer possible here, now that the rush up in the Wailing Hills had started? How was he to explain that his six blessed years of sanctuary in this dead desert town were at an end? Or that this big bluff man, Hod Weymarn, who had just cheated the faro bank, could, if he had only recognized Johnny, collect a reward of fifteen years' standing? Hod Weymarn, whom he had gambled against, fought with; who had courted his girl fifteen years ago in Rawhide! Hod was only the first. There would be others of that old gold-camp crowd who had known him in Rawhide, and who were sure to hit this boom camp. No, Johnny was not a man to ride his luck. He had to get out.

He went out for supper, couldn't eat, and returned at seven. Hod Weymarn had quit playing, and Johnny took over the bank with a sigh of desperate relief. He was safe so far. His coat off, his sleeve-guards on, his green eyeshade adjusted, his thoughts were soon drowned in the mechanics of faro.

AROUND eleven o'clock a stranger bought into the game and sat down at the table facing him. Johnny seemed not to notice him, but this one watched him so steadily that Johnny became uneasy. Only his bleached blue eyes became a little troubled; he dealt with the slowness that was maddening to some men. But covertly, Johnny was watching the man, combing his mind, in which there was a gallery of all the faces that had sat opposite him across the board. He could not place him. The man was about his own age, a prospector by his looks, with a hard though not evil face.

Presently, when there was a lull in the game, Johnny drew out a cigar and lighted it.

"Look here," the stranger said suddenly. "Don't I know you?"

Carefully, Johnny blew out the match and raised his gaze to the man's face. "You might. What's the name?"

"Bodine." There was a pause, during which Johnny scowled, then shook his head, and the man asked: "What's yours?"

"Hood—Johnny Hood."

The prospector studied him intently for a moment. "You traveled much?"

"Considerable," Johnny answered mildly.

"Ever hit Rawhide twelve-fifteen years ago?"

Johnny's face was carefully bland as he shook his head. "That's one I missed."

"Funny. There was a jasper there I'd swear was you—a young good-lookin' bucko that was mighty quick with cards and a gun," the prospector said carefully.

Johnny lifted up a pair of gnarled hands, whose fingers were twisted and crooked, as if they belonged around a plow- or hoe-handle. "Those look quick to you?" he asked mildly, and added: "I never carry a gun, either. No use. I couldn't get one out."

Bodine nodded curtly, as a player said: "Let's get the game goin', dealer."

"What was this man's name?" Johnny asked idly, returning his attention to the case.

"Johnny Cape."

Johnny only shook his head and called for bets, and the game went on. About midnight Bodine pulled out of the game, and Johnny breathed a sigh of relief. But he was even quieter than usual until the game closed down at two. Johnny got his coat and hat from behind the bar, refused the nightcap Rome offered him, said good-night and stepped out onto the dark street. Down in front of the restaurant a drunken argument was in progress, raising its defiance against the silence of the steadfast desert stars.

It wasn't cold, but Johnny shivered a little, thinking of Bodine this night, and turned down-street. He'd have to clear out. At one of the alley cross-streets he angled out toward the edge of town where some campfires were still glowing. He noticed a light in his two-room board shack. That would be Bob, his boy. Was he sick again? For a moment small panic stirred within Johnny, and then he laughed at himself. He was spooky to-night. First Weymarn, then Bodine, dragging those old ghosts out of the mire. And now Bob. Of course the boy was all right!

Whistling half-heartedly, Johnny approached the house and opened the door.

THERE was Bodine, sitting in a chair at the foot of Bob's cot. Fourteen-year-old Bob Hood was sitting up in bed, arms clasped around his knees, talking. He grinned, a wide-mouthed, freckle-faced grin, when he saw Johnny. But

Johnny was looking only at Bodine, as he closed the door.

"So you *are* Johnny Cape," Bodine said quietly. "My hunch was right."

Leaning against the door, little beads of sweat on his weary face, Johnny said carefully: "What makes you think that?"

"This boy. You see, I know the whole story. I was there."

Johnny's shoulders seemed to sag another inch. He crossed the room slowly and sank down on a chair, not even looking at his boy. Bob was watching him with wide eyes.

"Well?" Bodine asked bluntly.

"You've got me," Johnny murmured. "What are you going to do?"

"What do you mean, he's got you, Pop?" Bob asked. Johnny raised a hand for silence and looked up at Bodine. "Well?"

"Murder," Bodine said gently. "That one won't be forgotten for a long time. But I reckon I'd have a hard time collecting that reward after fifteen years."

"What is it you want?" Johnny asked in a strained voice. "Not punishment for me. Great God, haven't I suffered enough for something I never did?"

"Maybe."

"Will it do you any good to see me swing?"

"Not much," Bodine admitted.

But his mind wasn't on the conversation. There was a pleased, calculating look on his face as he glanced over the mean room. It held two cots, covered with patched blankets, a table, a trunk, two chairs. On a shelf nailed along two sides of the wall were china plates and a pitcher, an emergency way of making more room in this tiny cabin, and one that gave it an oddly decorative look. At one end of the shelf, there was a gun, a

.44, whose barrel was damascened in a spider web of gold and silver, the same as the ivory butt-plates. It was a strange, handsome gun. Bodine studied it a moment; then his gaze returned to Johnny.

"I'm not a vindictive man," he said quietly. "But I've had hard luck, Cape. Since I saw you in Rawhide, I've barely kept my head above water."

Johnny said: "For eight years I flunked for a dry farmer in Idaho until my name was forgotten. Are you telling me about hard luck?"

"I am," Bodine said. "Because now my hard luck is gone. How much money you got, Cape?"

JOHNNY didn't answer immediately. He looked level at Bodine, but he couldn't keep it out of his eyes. He knew there was no use lying. "A little."

"How much?"

"Fifteen hundred."

"I'll take it," Bodine said. "It's black-mail, I reckon; but it won't turn out to be. I've got a couple of claims down over in the Wailing Hills, Cape, that I can't work because I haven't the money. Yours will swing it. They're good claims. I'm sure of that, and it isn't a prospector's guess. You'll get a third share in them."

"And if I don't give you the money?" Johnny asked slowly.

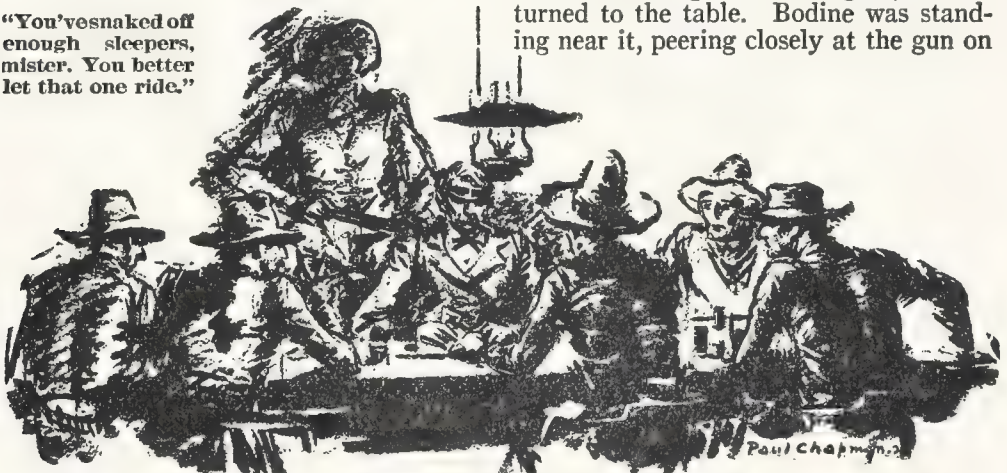
Bodine wasn't looking at him. He was looking at the gun again, studying it. "Eh?" he asked.

"What if I don't give you the money?"

"You will. Give me a check now."

Johnny rose wearily. He had waited too long. And now he must hit the trail again, broke this time, broke and on the run. He found his checkbook in the pocket of his other coat hanging on the wall. Avoiding his son's gaze, he returned to the table. Bodine was standing near it, peering closely at the gun on

"You've snaked off enough sleepers, mister. You better let that one ride."





"So you *are* Johnny Cape," Bodine said quietly. "My hunch was right."

the shelf. Johnny saw his hand raised to take it down, and he said swiftly: "Don't touch that, Bodine!"

Bodine looked queerly at him, and Johnny made a diffident gesture. "It's just parts of a gun. No screws in it. I assembled it. It's just propped up there. It'd come to pieces if you lifted it."

Bodine nodded, and Johnny sat down, opening his checkbook.

"Funny," Bodine said. "I know that gun, or one like it."

Johnny's pen, poised over the check, became immobile. Without looking up, he asked: "Where was that?"

"In Rawhide. I couldn't mistake that ivory inlay."

Johnny hadn't moved yet. He asked in a small voice: "Who had it?"

"Hod Weymarn, I remember. He used to carry it in a chamois sack. He put it up in a poker-game one night, and I came close to winnin' it."

There was a tiny sound of exhaling breath; and then Johnny started to write. He tore out the check, rose and handed it to Bodine.

"I've got to trust you," he said in a strained voice. "Just give me time to clear out."

"Are you sick?" Bodine asked, seeing Johnny's face.

"I reckon not. Would you mind goin', Bodine?"

Bodine folded up the check and put it in his shirt pocket, and said: "When I can get to a notary tomorrow, I'll make out the deed to your share of my claims and leave it at the post office. Hood's the name, eh?"

Johnny nodded slightly, and Bodine walked out.

As soon as the door was closed, Bob turned to Johnny.

"Did he say *murder*, Pop?" he asked slowly.

Johnny sat down and put his face in his hands. Presently, he began to talk. "Yes, murder. . . . Your mother, Bob."

"Mother? But you said—"

"I know. I had to lie." He looked at Bob now and talked on. "My name is Cape, Bob. Yours is too. I was freighting ore at Rawhide when Martha and I were married. You came a year later. . . . I—I used to drink then, son. Your mother hated it. One night, we quarreled and I got so drunk that—that they had to take me upstairs to sleep it off. We lived at the hotel. Martha put me to

bed on the cot. . . . I don't know how much later it was that I woke up. It was a fire in the building that woke me." He paused, his face gray. He was wondering if he should go on, and the look in Bob's face told him that the time was here.

"Your mother was murdered, Bob. She lay on the bed, dead, in the same room with me."

The listening boy's face held tense excitement. Johnny, watching him, knew now that he must skip the horrible part, the part about how Martha was murdered. What he could never say was that she had been struck a fearful blow on the head, that he, coming out of a drunken sleep, saw her there, a great smearing of blood on the bed and on the floor and on him. And what he would never say to any man alive was that, while the smoke was choking him, he groped around trying to understand. He had found a part of the white spread where the murderer had laid his gun, then wiped it of blood. It *had* been a gun. It had left its plain print in red on that spread; and a carved ivory butt-plate lay on the floor. And Johnny Cape, still drunk, wild with fear that the baby in the crib across the room would suffocate, still had presence of mind enough to rip off that corner of the spread that held the print of the gun, and pocket it, along with the carved butt-plate.

"I tried to carry her out, Bob. The building was a blazing inferno. But I couldn't carry her and you both. I chose you, the living one."

Bob's eyes were wide, his breath held.

"I gathered you in a blanket and rushed out into the hall. It was filled with smoke. I met a girl in the corridor. She yelled to go out the back way. I let her past me, turned and ran down the corridor. Passing our room, she looked in and saw your mother."

"AND thought you'd done it!" Bob said.

"Yes. She jumped out the back window and broke both ankles. I don't know how I got out. I threw you, and some men caught you. Then I jumped. When I came to, I was in jail, not hurt. And the sheriff told me what the girl had seen. I was covered with blood. I was the murderer, they said."

"And you escaped?"

Johnny nodded wearily. "That night. The sheriff liked me, trusted me. He came into my cell. I got his gun, tied

him, then broke out and hunted for you. I stole you out of the sheriff's house. The rest"—he shrugged—"you know."

"But you didn't kill her!"

"No."

"And you don't know who did?"

Again Johnny lied. "No."

Bob lay down again, his face tight, watching his father. Presently he said: "And we've got to go?"

Johnny didn't answer immediately. Then he said: "I'm not sure." When Bob looked puzzled, he went on in a low voice: "I've got to leave town, son. I'll be gone a couple of days. When I get back, I'll know."

THAT suited Bob. He lay thinking of all this, of Bodine's visit, of the cruelty of man toward man, and he hated it. He recalled each small part of this night's events. Then he asked Johnny, out of silence: "Why did you tell Bodine that gun didn't have any screws in it? Why didn't you want him to know it's made of wood?"

Johnny flushed a little. "I thought he might take it. He took everything else." But that wasn't the reason, and he could never tell Bob the real one, never tell him that this wooden gun had been fashioned with that bloodstained print on the spread as a model—that and the carved ivory butt-plate, and a picture he had happened on years later in an old arms-catalogue: the picture of an ornate revolver with a butt-plate like that. For before Johnny Hood had given up hope, he had believed that only when he found the man who owned that beautiful and strange gun, he would know the man who killed his wife. And now he did know—Hod Weymarn. Thinking of it, he felt murder in his blood, and he liked it.

He rose and said: "You want to ask a lot of questions, don't you, son?"

"Uh-huh," Bob said seriously.

"Can they wait till tomorrow, or next day?"

Bob understood. "Sure."

"If I'm not here when you get up, Bob, don't worry. I may go away."

"Where?"

"I don't know yet," Johnny said grimly. He reached down and pulled off his boots, and Bob turned over to the wall. Johnny thumbed the lamp down and lay there listening until Bob's breathing became regular and deep. Then he sat up, put on his boots, tiptoed over to the trunk in the corner, opened it, and from

its depths drew out a .45, a cedar-handled one whose butt-plates were scarred and scuffed, and whose barrel had long since lost its blue sheen. This, with a handful of time-blackened shells, he thrust in his coat pocket. He took one other thing from that room before he blew out the lamp and softly left the room. It was the wooden gun.

THE Wailing Hills gold-camp was a good day's ride across desert from Pinal Tanks, but Johnny was not alone in his ride. Along the new and sandy road across the dry flats, there was a slow train of moving wagons, all heading south toward the Wailing Hills. Johnny joined that stream, riding with the deliberation of a man whose mind is made up, and who will accept his fate.

He arrived at the Wailing Hills camp after dark. It lay in sprawling untidiness across the floor of a wide cañon in the foothills, a tangle of tents and shacks and piled freight and men and horses in lantern light. Two rough streets had already been laid out at right angles, and prominent on the week-old corner was a tent, bearing the sign, BONANZA BAR. A barker stood on a trestle at its door, calling the camp to the night's play, while across from him, another barker before another tent was crying the same wares.

Johnny got off his horse and left it standing there and made his way through the thronged street to the Bonanza and went in.

The stench of its closed and fetid air struck him and he almost gagged—and then he was lost in the hullabaloo. A rough board floor matched the same kind of bar, while in the rear of the tent, taking up most of the room, were the gambling-tables. Kerosene lanterns hung from the guy wires overhead, and swung low because of the inflammable roof.

Johnny stood in the middle of that crowd and sought his man. He saw him, fronting a faro-table.

Confidently, Johnny made his way to Hod Weymarn's side. Hod did not look up. He was deep in the game.

Carefully, Johnny drew out his wooden gun and handled it fondly, looking at it. It was a skillful job, so clever that only by handling the gun could a man tell it was not metal. Then, across the squares in front of Hod Weymarn, he laid the gun down, keeping one hand on it.

Hod stopped, his hand poised with a stack of chips, as he saw the gun, and

the faro-dealer looked up irritably at Johnny.

"Remember that gun, Hod?" Johnny said quietly.

Something in the attitude of those two men, both utterly motionless, warned the other players. They backed away, leaving Johnny and Hod facing the table, looking down at it.

Slowly, Hod Weymarn raised his gaze from the gun to Johnny. He licked his gray lips and said: "Johnny—*Johnny Cape!*"

Johnny picked up the gun, pointed it at Hod, and said: "That's right."

"I—I—" Hod didn't say any more. He raised his hands shoulder high, pivoting to confront Johnny, and they stared at each other a long moment.

"You—you aint goin' to kill me over a two-timin' woman, are you, Johnny?" Hod said huskily.

Johnny laughed. And there was joy in it. For Johnny knew he was right now, and he understood that Hod Weymarn, because he wanted Martha, had killed her because he couldn't get her.

Johnny was pulling back on the hammer of the gun and suddenly it broke off under his thumb. Only then did he realize what he had to do.

"Hell, that's wood!" the faro-dealer said.

But Johnny already was fumbling inside his coat pocket for the real gun, trying to make his stiffened fingers work. He saw Hod Weymarn's swift clutch at the gun on his hip, saw it come up and heard it crash.

Johnny was still laughing. He even laughed when he reached in and freed the sight from the tear in the lining of his coat. Then he raised the gun and shot carefully—one shot while Weymarn fired again three times. But that one shot was aimed carefully while the other fired with the wildness of desperation.

WEYMARN was already dead when they picked Johnny up from where he had fallen—hurt badly, true, but with years of life in him.

One of those men was Bodine. When they took Johnny's gun away, it was Bodine who kept it.

"That's damn' funny, Johnny," Bodine said. "He just paid me thirty thousand for those claims. What's got into you?"

Johnny knew he could tell eventually, but he didn't answer. He just fondled the wooden gun and smiled, knowing hope again.



The BLOOMING TURK

A moving story of deep-water men by that grand old man of the sea who gave us "Home is the Sailor," "My Life at Sea," and many others.

By **BILL ADAMS**

YOU ask me to spin you a yarn of the sea? Well, maybe I could, at that. That's my ship, at the dock-side. Come aboard, and we'll sit in the chart-room. The skipper's ashore. . .

Yes, it's a nice chart-room, isn't it? That's the chronometer. That's the skipper's sextant. And that's the flag-locker. And that picture on the bulk-head? That's the skipper's wife.

I know. I'll tell you about Alphonse. . .

I was an apprentice when I met Alphonse, and my ship was in dock at Antwerp. I'd joined her that morning, with Norton and Hazard, the two other apprentices. But no new apprentice had come to take the place of one who'd finished his time and left her at the end of our last voyage. We supposed no one was coming.

We were putting the hatches on, bossed by the second mate. He was new to the ship, and seemed to have no use for apprentices. A big chap he was, and very powerful—about twenty-four or so. A fine-looking man, but surly-voiced when he spoke to us—scowling. But we'd all been three years at sea, and a second mate can't try riding apprentices who know their job.

"Shiver my jib! Look ashore!" exclaimed Norton as a longshoreman came over the gangway, carrying an apprentice's sea-chest. And standing by a pile of cargo on the dock, we saw a youngster rigged out in the brass buttons of a green apprentice. He was short and wide and fat, with a round rosy face and eyes like big blue moons. A wave of butter-colored hair showed under the brim of



"Why, the blooming little Turk! The lucky swab!" said Norton, as we watched them.

his cap. He looked like a cherub; all he lacked was the wings. Seeing us looking at him, he smiled a friendly guileless smile. "There's the new apprentice. He's a Belgian," said the mate, passing by.

THE second mate, whose name was Hooker, growled something about the nerve of foreigners coming in Limey ships. Lots of Belgian boys came in Limey ships. Then he bawled: "Get aboard here! What do you think you are? An admiral?"

"*Venez ici, mon ami!*" called Norton, meaning "Come here, my friend!" He knew a little French, and was very proud of it.

"What the blazes you saying?" asked Hooker.

"I was telling him what you said, sir," replied Norton.

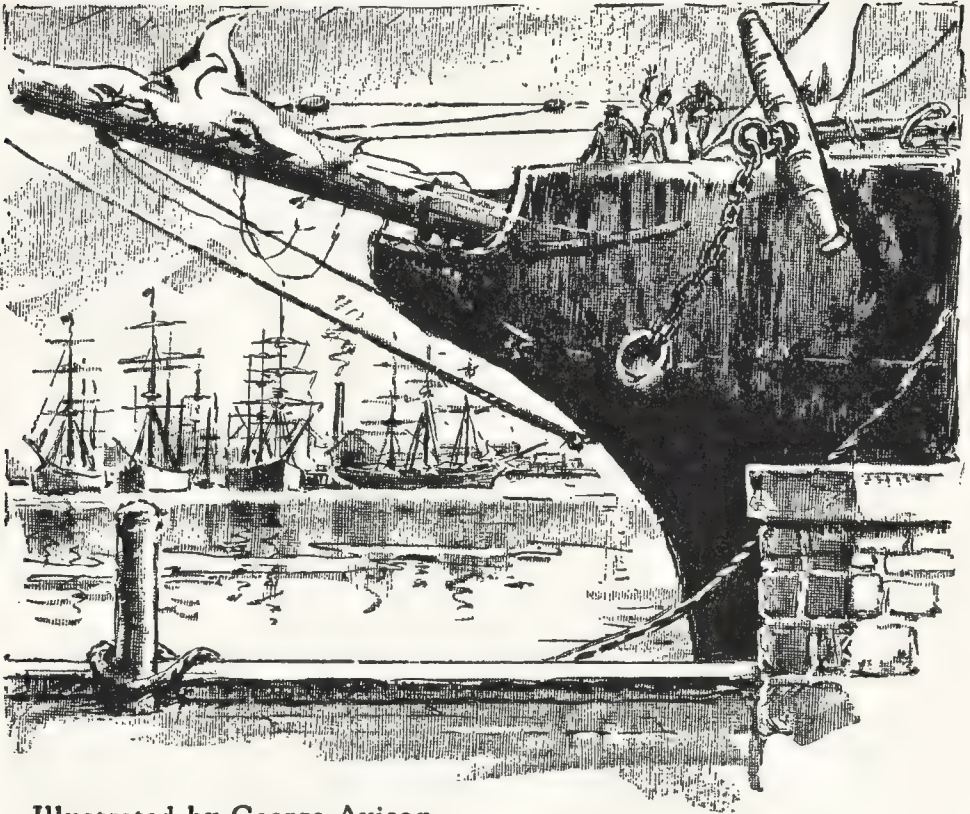
"You can leave me do the telling," growled Hooker, and again bawled to the kid to get aboard. The kid turned and spoke to some one we couldn't see, and a girl stepped from behind the pile of cargo. Man, she was the trimmest packet ever you saw! She looked a bit older than the kid but even shorter. She had gray eyes, with long curved lashes, and dainty arching brows. She had a dimple in her saucy chin, and her nose was saucy too. Her mouth would have started a riot in a bachelor's club. Slender she was; and from her trim little feet to the thick

braids of her brown hair, she was sailor's temptation. She went right into the kid's arms.

"Why, the blooming little Turk! The lucky young swab! He's starting early," said Norton as we watched them. Hazard and I felt the same way about it. A green kid, with a girl like that! Neither of us had ever looked at a girl till we came in from our first voyage.

"I'll lucky him!" growled Hooker, and again bawled to the kid to get aboard. He put his arms round the girl again and kissed her lips. And she put her arms round him and kissed his. You should have heard Norton sigh! And then, as the kid came aboard, the mate shouted: "Get the gangway in!" We were going to sea.

Hooker threw the girl a kiss, and she turned up her nose. And then Norton, from behind Hooker, took off his cap and bowed to her. And I'm blessed if she didn't set a finger to her lips and throw him a kiss. The kid, aboard now, saw it.



Illustrated by George Avison

And Norton at once said: "Sorry, kid. No offense meant." One sailor doesn't monkey with another sailor's girl; and even if he was green yet, the kid was one of us.

The kid looked at Norton, smiled a friendly guileless smile, and said: "Zass all right." And then Hooker bawled at him to get out of his brass buttons and into working-togs; and with the tugboat ready to take us to sea, there was no time to be looking at girls or anything else.

By when the kid joined us in his working-togs, the ship was slipping out to the stream, and the girl was gone. He got into everyone's way, of course, as green kids always do. Hooker started to bawl him out. It didn't faze him. He just went on getting into everyone's way; and whenever Hooker cussed him, smiled his friendly smile. And the more he smiled, the more Hooker cussed him. He was soon sweating, his pink cheeks grimy with sweat and harbor dust. By when we got down to sea it was dusk, and he was good and tired. At eight o'clock the mates picked the watches; and Hazard and I, in the mate's watch, went below till midnight. Norton and the kid, in

Hooker's watch, had to stay on deck. So when next I saw the kid, it was midnight. And did he look done in!

"It's a dog's life, Alphonse," I said to him.

"Zass all right," said he, and managed to smile. "Zass all right," seemed to be all the English he knew.

Maybe you don't know anything about the sea? Well, an apprentice did all the common dirty work in his first voyage. Alphonse spent his time polishing brass, scouring paint, greasing the royal-masts, and being cussed by Hooker. If it hadn't been for Norton, he'd have had a lot worse time than he did. In the dog-watches, when they were off duty at the end of the day's work, Norton walked the deck with him; and they'd gesticulate, Norton talking what little French he knew, picking up more from the kid, and teaching him English. It used to rile Hooker to see him helping out the "blasted little foreigner."

It's a sort of unwritten rule that officers don't come into the apprentices' quarters. Only now and then a mate, or second mate, will drop in during the dog-watch to ask for a light for his pipe, and pass a few words maybe, just to show

he isn't stuck up. If he sees an apprentice studying navigation, maybe he'll give him a few hints.

One evening Hooker came into our quarters. Norton was working a navigation problem. He, Hazard and I were going to be out of our apprenticeships at the end of the voyage and able to take our exams for second mate's ticket. Seeing what Norton was at, Hooker scowled. Hazard winked at me, behind his back. We'd found out why he had it in for apprentices. He'd been eight years at sea, and had never been able to get more than a second mate's ticket. He ought to have passed for master long ago. But while he was a cracking good hand at seamanship, he was a dub at figures, and always failed in his navigation exam. So he'd seen green kids come to sea, finish their apprenticeships, and go ahead of him.

"How do you like the sea, you blithering little foreigner?" asked Hooker.

Maybe Alphonse understood, and maybe not. I don't know. He smiled his friendly smile and said: "Zass all right, sir." And then Norton said something to him in French, and they went to jabbering French. Hooker took it for granted they were talking about him. But he couldn't do anything. He'd no business in our quarters. He scowled and went off, and from then on took to picking on Alphonse more than ever. And all the kid did was to smile his friendly guileless smile. Nothing fazed him. He was getting used to the sea, and hard work. You never saw a green kid harden up so fast. He was keen to learn too, and getting to know the names of all the gear. Early in the voyage Norton had tried to draw him out about the girl, and his people, and so on. But all he said was: "Zass all right. I weesh to learn about zee sheep." The ship and sea were all he wanted to talk of.

AFTER a while Hooker came into our quarters again. And that evening Alphonse's bunk curtains happened to be drawn back. Over his bunk hung the girl's picture. Hooker stepped up and took it down. "You've got no business with a girl like that," he said, and went off, taking the picture with him.

"He's got his infernal nerve," said Norton. But the kid said: "Zass all right." When I woke Hooker to come on duty at midnight, the girl's picture was tacked up over his bunk. . . .

Most green kids soon lose their fat, when they get to sea. But Alphonse

stayed plump and rosy as ever. By when we got down to the Horn, he was looking like a cherub still. It was winter off the Horn, and cold as misery. But while we shivered, he seemed not to care about the bitter weather. Sometimes he'd even go on deck without his oilskins on. One sleety day he went aloft to help furl the mainsail, with nothing on above his belt but a wool undershirt and sou'wester. Once in a while you'll see a sailor do such a thing, and he's always a fat fellow. Alphonse was the hardiest little cuss of a first-voyager you ever saw, and it was plain as a pike-staff he was going to make a fine sailor some day.

ONE day, when we were well past the Horn, Norton was in the lower rigging splicing a rope. There was a stiff squally wind, and a big sea; and every few minutes it rained hard, hiding everything a little way from the ship. Dusk was setting in; and in a hurry to finish his job, Norton was careless and didn't hang on when the ship took a heavy roll. No one saw him go overboard. We heard him yell, and then all hands were running to stop the ship and get a boat out. It was mighty risky, putting a boat out with dusk coming, in that wild weather. She might not be able to get back.

The first to jump into the boat was Alphonse. A green kid's no use in a boat, of course. Hooker shouted to him to get back aboard; but either he didn't hear, or he paid no attention. So away went the boat, with him crouched in her bow.

Norton could hardly swim at all, but some one had thrown a life-buoy and it had fallen within his reach. So they picked him up, and got back to the ship all right. As soon as the boat was hoisted, Hooker started to bawl Alphonse out for having gone in her.

"Zass all right, sir," said Alphonse, with his friendly smile.

"I'll show you it *isn't* all right, disobeying my orders," said Hooker, and raised a hand as though to cuff the kid.

Norton stepped up, grasped Hooker's arm, and said: "You low-down cur!" And at that Hooker lost control of himself, swung on Norton, and struck him. It wasn't really much of a blow, for before he hit Norton, he realized what he was doing. They stood glaring at each other for a moment, and Hooker walked off. An apprentice can't very well strike an officer, of course.

From that evening Alphonse quit smiling when Hooker spoke to him. And if,

before, his smiling had exasperated Hooker, his not doing so annoyed him now even more. "Smile, when I give you an order, blast you!" he'd say. Nothing doing. And since there's no law to make an apprentice smile, Hooker could do nothing—except pick on the kid more than ever.

One squally day in the North Pacific, Hooker gave the order to haul down the inner jib. The ship was pitching hard in a high head sea, and sticking her boom under at each pitch. Furling an inner jib's no job for any but seasoned seamen. But when the sail was ready for furling, Hooker shouted to Alphonse: "Get out and lend a hand with that sail!"

As Alphonse started out along the pitching boom, the bell struck, and a man relieved Norton at the wheel. He'd just left the wheel when the ship took a wild pitch, and buried her boom in the sea, dipping Alphonse and the sailor he was helping clear under. When she lifted, Alphonse was gone. And then, as the ship drove past him, Norton vaulted the poop rail and jumped in after him.

It was the first mate took the boat that time. No one knew if Alphonse could swim. We knew well enough that Norton could swim but very little.

Hazard and I went in the boat, with a couple of able seamen. As we pulled from the ship, I saw that some one had thrown one of the poop life-buoys to the sea. Maybe one of them would be able to get to it. Maybe we'd be able to save one of them, at any rate. And then a black squall hid the ship, and the wind yelled, and the sprays flew—and our hearts sank low. No one could stay long alive in that savage sea, even if he did have hold of a life-buoy.

The squall blew by. "Pull! Pull for all you're worth!" shouted the mate. And then in a minute I was dragging Norton into the boat, and the life-buoy after him. And there, maybe fifty feet away, was Alphonse, swimming like a fish. When I hauled him aboard, he wasn't even winded. "Zass all right. Danks you ver mooch," he said, with his cherubic smile.

WELL, after that, Alphonse and Norton were thicker than ever; and because Alphonse was popular as pie with all hands, Hooker had to lay off riding him so hard. One day I heard the mate say to Hooker: "That Belgian lad's going to make a fine officer some day." But Hooker scowled and said nothing.

For the return voyage the watches were shifted over: Hazard and I going to Hooker's watch, Norton and the kid to the mate's. So now Hooker would have nothing to do with Alphonse.

On the first night at sea, when he called Hooker to come on duty at midnight, Alphonse, before waking him, took down the girl's picture from above his bunk. He was gone before Hooker missed it. Coming to our quarters, he handed it to Norton. "I giffs eet you, my vren," he said.

"I'd sure like to meet the original," said Norton and hung the picture in his bunk. He'd just done so when Hooker came in. "Where's my girl's picture?" he demanded—then saw it, and stepped up to take it.

"No, you don't!" said Norton. "And you can get out of here, too. You've no business here, and you know it."

Well, Norton was a little bit of a slim fellow; and Hooker could have lifted him with one hand, almost. But Hooker knew that he was in the wrong, and Norton in the right. So all he could do was to curse us all and go.

THE ship docked in London at the end of the voyage. We three old hands packed our sea-chests, to leave her and go ashore and take our exams for second mates' tickets. Alphonse was going over to Belgium till it was time for him to join for another voyage. The mate came in and shook hands all round. Hooker didn't show up. But when we came to the gangway on our way ashore, he was there. Taking the girl's picture from his pocket, Norton held it up for him to see, and said: "Pretty classy, eh?"

"You can go to blazes," growled Hooker; then, turning to Alphonse, he said: "If ever I meet you in another ship, look out for yourself!"

"Zass all right," said Alphonse, looking Hooker full in the face. And then, with no handshaking with Hooker, we were gone ashore. And soon we bade Alphonse good-by and good luck. Small chance that any of us would meet him again. Once he was out of his apprenticeship, he'd be going in one of his own country's vessels, of course. . . .

Two years later I was looking for a second mate's berth. Having been hurt by a fall, I'd had to stay a long while ashore, so had not been able to try even for my mate's ticket yet, let alone my master's. And who should I meet up with but Norton, who'd just passed for master

and was looking for a master's berth. A great talk we had, and a few drinks; and when we parted, he promised that did he find a master's berth, he'd send for me to go second mate with him. There were lots of good men looking for masters' berths, men with wider experience than he, and I feared there was scant chance of his getting one. But a week or so later he sent me word that he'd been offered command of a ship that had just finished loading in Hamburg. We crossed over together that night. He told me the ship had a mate, some man the owners engaged. And she carried no apprentices.

When we went aboard the ship next morning, there was a man seated on her quarter-rail, close by the gangway, with his back to us. He looked up as we stepped to the deck. Then he rose to his feet and stared. And we stared back.

Norton held out a hand. Hooker didn't take it. Maybe you'd hardly blame him, with a fellow who'd been an apprentice under him, and had called him a cur, as his skipper. I didn't hold out my hand. We ignored one another. And leaving him there, Norton and I went to our cabins.

Now that we were aboard, I'd have to keep my place with regard to Norton. A skipper and second mate can't fraternize, of course. Sea custom. A mate and skipper can fraternize to a small extent. But I knew there'd be no fraternizing between Norton and Hooker. And I knew there'd be none between Hooker and me, though the mates of a ship can have pleasant times together in the dog-watches when the day's work is done. We were in for a queer sort of voyage, I judged.

IT was a queer voyage, and I don't know for whom it was queerest. At first I'd sometimes see Norton looking as though he were going to unbend and try to break the ice. But he never did. And at times I saw Hooker looking as though maybe he were going to. But he never did, either. For my part, I didn't know what to do, so did nothing. And never a word passed between Hooker and me, or between him and Norton, save what words had to do with the ship. Sometimes I had a glimpse of Hooker in his cabin, studying navigation for his master's ticket. And always I'd feel sure that if he'd open up and go ask Norton to help him, Norton would gladly do so. But there he sat alone, chewing the end of his pencil, and frowning at his figures.

And I in my cabin sat often alone too, studying for my mate's ticket, and wishing I dared ask Hooker to give me a hint. We each led the life of a hermit.

To make up for what we lacked in companionship, Hooker and I devoted ourselves all the more to having the ship's work well done. A man has to have something; we made the ship that something. Besides, I wanted to do all I could for the ship, for Norton's sake. I don't know if ever Hooker felt the same way about it. At times I thought that maybe he did. And I don't know what Norton thought. Maybe he thought Hooker didn't care one way or the other, and took such pains to have the ship's work well done just out of a sort of pique. I think, too, that maybe that thought piqued Norton; for one day what did he do but hang on the chart-room bulkhead the girl's picture that Alphonse had given him—right where Hooker would see it every day, of course.

NOT till one evening when we were getting well up-channel on our return voyage did Norton and I have any conversation together. We'd been knocking round for over a year by then. Coming up to the poop where I was alone in charge, he slacked up on the rigid old sea custom and chatted a bit with his second mate. We were not a bit shy: each wanting to speak of old times, but afraid lest Hooker, in his cabin just below, overhear. It was a very still evening, and sounds carried. We could hear the murmur of the men's voices in their quarters forward. I think we both felt a bit foolish for having let the voyage pass as we had.

When I went to the poop again at midnight, Norton was there. Hooker, gone below to his cabin now, had called him. The ship was creeping along in a light breeze, under shortened sail, making maybe two miles an hour in fog so thick that you could have cut it with a knife, almost. From all about us came the fog-horns of other vessels feeling their way up channel or out to open sea.

"The barometer's falling. It's going to blow. I don't care how hard it blows if it'll clear the fog away," said Norton.

After perhaps half an hour the breeze died utterly. The ship rode erect, motionless, on a flat sea: the sole sound now the blare of her fog-horn. We seemed now to be alone in the dense fog.

And then, all in a tick, a roaring squall struck the ship: so that despite her re-



Again she lowered a boat and again the sea smashed it against her plates.

duced sail, she lay far over and surged ahead at quite a fast speed. But the wind soon died again, without having blown for long enough to clear off the fog. We'd traveled perhaps a couple of miles while the squall blew. The ship rode erect again, lifting a little now to the uneasy sea the squall had kicked up.

And then, with the ship still moving a little, still carried by the momentum the squall had given her, the lookout-man shouted something—something that we couldn't hear because his words were drowned by the high shrill whistle of a steamer's siren very close to us. It died,

and we heard an officer shout to his helmsmen to put his helm hard up. Next instant there was a grinding crash, and the ship quivered from stem to stern. We heard shouting from the fog close by, and the noisy jangle of the engine-room telegraph of the steamer that had struck us. She was backing away. And then came a wilder squall than the first; and at once, with its rigging carried away by the steamer, the foremast snapped short off at the deck and fell, bringing down the main and mizzen topmasts with it.

Our forward plates were crumpled. The ship was taking in water through

them. And the mizzen topmast had fallen on and smashed the pumps, and both boats. We couldn't pump her out. We couldn't leave her. We were helpless. The fog was blowing away, but there was no sign of the steamer. She'd gone, left us to our fate.

Somehow in the screaming darkness we got the wreckage cut away. It was dawn when we were done. The ship was down by the bow, and lifting sluggishly, with the seas sweeping over her foredeck every now and again. Norton ordered all hands to the poop. And there we were, skipper, mates and crew, scanning the empty seas for a vessel that might take us off. An hour dragged by, and another hour. Plainly, the ship wasn't going to last much longer.

AND then Norton put his hand on Hooker's shoulder. Hooker turned, an eager look on his face. They were opening up now at last, going to make friends. But before either could speak, one of the crew yelled, and pointed away down to leeward.

And there above the wild horizon was the smoke of a steamer, away on our quarter. We could see her topmasts, too.

Hooker darted into the chart-room for rockets—our one hope now. If the steamer heard or saw them, maybe she'd be able to get to us before the ship went down. Just maybe. She was far off, and the wind was a long incessant scream.

One after another Hooker fired rockets, till but three were left. The steamer was on our beam by then, passing on. "Fire the last three together!" shouted Norton. And as they exploded all together, the crash of the last three rockets rose high above the tumult of the wind and sea. Then in a minute there was a cheer from our crew. The steamer's topmasts were coming into line; she was altering her course toward us. But the ship's bow was very low now. Her foredeck was under water, her stern high. At any moment she might go. And when she went, the life-belts we'd put on at dawn were not going to keep us long alive in the savage sea.

She was a tramp steamer, slow at her best; and now, with wind and sea against her, seeming scarce to move. But she did move. We saw her upper works soon, and then her hull.

Norton stood watching, with one hand on Hooker's shoulder. I stood at Hooker's other side, his hand on my arm. There was no need now for any words.

We were looking death in the face together, and by-gones were by-gones.

At last the steamer passed under our stern, to take a position to windward of us. We could see her name on her stern as she passed. "*L'Etoile d'Espérance*," and under it her port of registry, "*Antwerp*." Hooker's hand tightened on my shoulder, and I knew that he was thinking of the time we'd pulled out of Antwerp together long ago.

Pitching and rolling, sheets of spray driving over her, the steamer lay to, as close as she dared, to windward. A terribly long way it seemed. Making a slick for her boat, she began to dump oil on the sea. And then she lowered a boat. And as though it had been an egg-shell, the sea picked it up and crushed it against her plates. We saw the boat's crew, just visible in the flying spray, clamber back to her deck. Again she lowered a boat, and again the sea smashed it against her plates. Again we saw five dim figures climb back to her deck. The ship was almost gone now.

And then, as the steamer began to lower yet another boat, Hooker darted into the chart-room. Norton and all the crew were watching the steamer. But I saw Hooker take down the girl's picture from the chart-room bulkhead, wrap it in a piece of oilskin, and put it in his inside pocket. Then, as a cheer rose from our crew, I turned to see a boat coming toward us on the oil slick the steamer had made for her. I could see the oilskin-clad backs of the men at her long oars. But her officer, standing, leaning on the steering-oar, had on above his belt nothing but an undershirt, and a sou'wester, the brim of which hid his face.

"Jump, lads!" shouted Norton, when the boat was as close as she dared come. And while the boat's officer held her a little way from the ship's side, our crew jumped and were hauled in by her crew. One after another they jumped and were dragged from the sea, till only Norton, Hooker and I were left.

And then Norton and Hooker each gave my hand a quick grip, and both shouted: "Jump! Good luck!"

THERE wasn't going to be room in the boat for more than one more man. She was overcrowded already. As junior officer, it was for me to go, whether I wanted to or not. Even if I didn't want to, it was for me to obey my skipper's order. And I must not keep the boat waiting in that mad sea.

I wanted to go, of course. Who wouldn't? And yet again, I didn't want to. And as I stood hesitant, I saw the boat's officer look up, and for the first time saw his face. A look of amazement came to his face. But it passed at once, and in its place came a delighted smile. With a heave on his steering-oar he brought the boat close in to the ship's side. And then, before I knew what he was doing, he grasped a down-hanging rope and hove himself up to us.

"Jump!" shouted Alphonse, looking at Hooker; and then, to me: "Jump!" And at once I knew that Alphonse had in mind. He was going to stay with Norton—going to put the boat in charge of Hooker, and go down with his old comrade. "Jump!" Norton ordered me sternly. And I jumped.

And then, looking up at the ship, I saw Hooker throw his arms round Norton and lift him bodily from his feet. Norton's struggles were utterly useless. Hooker lifted him clear over the ship's rail, and dropped him into the boat.

There was nothing Norton could do, of course. He must save his ship's crew, and the crew of the boat. He couldn't stop to argue in that mad sea. So he took the steering-oar, and swung the boat away toward the steamer. And I, looking up, saw Hooker and Alphonse on the doomed ship's poop clasp each other's hands. And then, because of the flying spray, and the rain, I could see no more.

WE came to the steamer; Norton, last to leave the boat, was no sooner aboard her than the sea picked her up and smashed her flat against the steamer's plates. And then the rain cleared, and I looked to the ship. Only her poop, and the stumps of her wrecked masts, were above the water now. And at the moment that I looked, her stern rose high. And then she was gone. But ere yet she was quite gone, I heard the jangle of the steamer's engine-room telegraph, and the skipper shouting to the helmsman to put his helm hard up. Trembling, the steamer swung into the great seas and headed for where the ship had been. And where she had been were two little dots; visible now for a moment, now lost, now visible again, in the foam-crested rollers: Hooker, upheld by a life-belt—and Alphonse, swimming close by him.

We hauled them aboard, Norton and I, and some of the steamer's crew, by ropes flung to them. Over the rail to the

deck we hauled them, and helped them to their feet. For a minute they stood gasping, shaking the water from them, getting their breath. Then, smiling the old cherubic smile, Alphonse held out a hand to Hooker, and said: "Zass all right, eh?" And Hooker took the hand.

And then Hooker put a hand into his inner pocket and brought out a piece of tight-wrapped oilskin, and from within the oilskin took the girl's picture.

"Here's your girl's picture, sir," said Hooker, holding it out to Norton.

"Well, shiver my jib!" exclaimed Norton. "Shiver my jib! She's not *my* girl."

So Hooker held the picture out to Alphonse. And smiling his old friendly smile, Alphonse said: "Zass all right. You like; you 'ave." And Hooker put the picture in his pocket again.

NEXT day we came to Antwerp; on the dock was a crowd of relatives and friends of the steamer's people. As soon as the gangway was over, two girls came hurrying up it, each trying to push past the other, and both of them laughing. One was the girl whose picture you see on the bulkhead there, the other a trim little clipper-built blonde. They reached the deck together, ran straight to Alphonse, threw their arms round him, and began hugging and kissing him. And Alphonse put an arm round each, and kissed and hugged both in return.

"Well, shiver my jib! The blooming little Turk!" exclaimed Norton.

And then Alphonse pointed to Norton, and said: "Zere 'e ees, zee man zat try to safe my life ven I vos vash overboard ven I vos a leetle apprentice. I 'ave tell you of 'eem!"

Instantly the girls ran to Norton, threw their arms round him, and kissed him. Red as a beet he was. You never saw anyone look so funny. He was married, you see, and had a couple of kids. Maybe I've forgotten to mention it.

And then Alphonse took Hooker's arm, and said: "My vren, I veesh introduce you to mine sweet'art and mine sister. You not married, eh, mine vren?" And he smiled his friendly guileless smile again. And then in a minute he was walking off, with an arm round the trim little blonde; and Hooker, holding the other girl's hand, was looking like a hooked but happy codfish while she smiled saucily up at him.

Here comes my skipper, sir. And his wife's with him too. . . . Meet Captain and Mrs. Hooker, sir.

Guaranteed Antiques of Song and Story

Edited by CARL SANDBURG

Author of "Abraham Lincoln," "Smoke and Steel," "The People," "Yes!" etc.

The Dying Hogger

Arr. A. G. W.

Sostenuto

A hog - ger on his death - bed lay. His life was ooz - ing fast a - way; The

The first system of musical notation for 'The Dying Hogger'. It features a vocal line in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo marking 'Sostenuto' is above the staff. The lyrics are 'A hog - ger on his death - bed lay. His life was ooz - ing fast a - way; The'. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass, with a key signature of one sharp and a 4/4 time signature. The piano part includes chords and moving lines in both hands.

snakes and sting - ers round him pressed To hear the hog - ger's last re - quest. He

The second system of musical notation. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'snakes and sting - ers round him pressed To hear the hog - ger's last re - quest. He'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

said, "Be - fore I bid a - dieu, One last re - quest I'll make of you; Be -

The third system of musical notation. The vocal line continues with the lyrics 'said, "Be - fore I bid a - dieu, One last re - quest I'll make of you; Be -'. The piano accompaniment continues with chords and moving lines.

fore I soar be - yond the stars, Just hook me on to nine - ty cars.

The fourth system of musical notation. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics 'fore I soar be - yond the stars, Just hook me on to nine - ty cars.' The piano accompaniment concludes with chords and moving lines.

Made in America

ONCE on a newspaper assignment during the copper mine strike in the Calumet region, I spent an hour with a "wobbly" who had been switchman, cowboy, jailbird. He sang this song.

"Hogger" is railroad slang for an engineer or "hoghead," while a "tallow-pot" is a fireman. "Snake" and "stinger" are pet names among switchmen and brakemen, whose two brotherhood organizations during a number of years antagonized each other and engaged in jurisdictional disputes.

1

A hogger on his death-bed lay;
His life was oozing fast away;
The snakes and stingers round him pressed
To hear the hogger's last request.
He said, "Before I bid adieu,
One last request I'll make of you;
Before I soar beyond the stars,
Just hook me on to ninety cars.

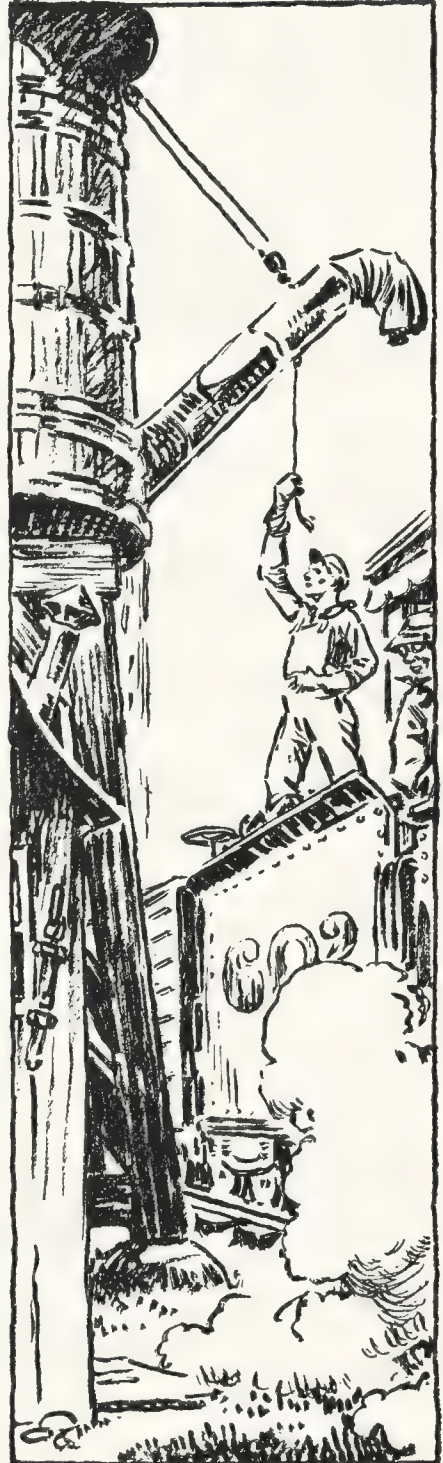
2

"A marble slab I do not crave;
Just mark the head of my lonely grave
With a draw-bar pointing to the skies,
Showing the spot where this hogger lies.
Oh, just once more before I'm dead
Let me stand the conductor on his head;
Let me see him crawl from under the wreck
With a way-car window-sash around his neck.

3

"And you, dear friends, I'll have to thank,
If you'll let me die at the water-tank,
Within my ears that old-time sound,
The tallow-pot pulling the tank-spout down.
And when at last in the grave I'm laid,
Let it be in the cool of the water-tank shade.
And put within my cold, still hand
A monkey-wrench and the old oil-can."

Several hundred of our pioneer songs have been gathered by Carl Sandburg and published in book form by Harcourt, Brace and Company, under the title "The American Songbag."



WARRIORS in

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

THAT crabbed and old Spanish mountaineer Gaspenjo with his white hair and wrinkled face, could certainly curse; and the language furthered his aims. The old scoundrel was guiding me over the mountains of Catalonia, for a fat fee. The revolution was just then breaking, and I wanted to get out; and Gaspenjo was getting me out. He was old, but agile as his tongue, and I was rather surprised to find that he possessed not only the traditional Spanish pride, but a certain



Miguel's pistol exploded—the bullet fanned the face of Don Jorge. The latter's carbine discharged, almost without volition.

amount of education and culture. Uncouth as he was, he knew his history like a book.

"And why not?" he said, on the day we rode up to the lonely bleak mountain hut that he called home. We were to break our journey there. "My family, señor, have shared in this history of ours. A hundred years ago, when things in Spain were almost exactly as they are today, my father and his brother were in the thick of it."

"Your father?" I repeated. "A hundred years ago? That's stretching it."

"No," he said gravely. "I am not young; my father was young then. I'll show you his picture presently. He was in the French army, in the Foreign Legion. The Legion kept its name in Spain, you know, even if it was only a regiment without a flag."

This tiny detail showed his real knowledge. Curiously enough, the Foreign

Legion ceased to be part of the French Army in 1835, when it was loaned *en masse* to Queen Isabella, to help defend her throne against the Carlists. And it had no flag, for its regimental *drapeau* was taken back to Paris when it left Algiers for Spain. . . .

We rode on to the stone hut. No one was there; old Gaspenjo lived alone. The one big room inside was smelly but comfortable; and before darkness closed down, Gaspenjo had cooked an amazingly good meal over the corner fireplace. His wine was truly admirable. We ate, drank, smoked and relaxed.

"A hundred years ago," he said musingly, "and the situation about what it is today. Don Carlos trying for the throne, against the child Isabella; and red war without quarter. Father against son, brother against brother. My father was in the Legion, though his only brother was with the Carlists."

EXILE

"THE LEGION IN SPAIN"
*sets forth a stirring drama of
this famous fighting force in the
war-torn Spain of 1835.*

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon



"What got your father into the Legion?" I asked curiously.

Gaspenjo shrugged.

"He enlisted in Algeria—there was a Spanish battalion then. Every battalion was a nationality; Spanish, Polish, Belgian and so on. But Colonel Bernelle, who brought the Legion here, broke all that up; and a good thing too. He mixed up all the nationalities except the Poles, and formed them into three squadrons of lancers. I tell you, those Legionnaires did some fighting in Spain! Over four thousand came from Algiers, and only five hundred went back."

HE stared into the fire, his seamed, wrinkled old features wreathed by smoke as it issued from his lips.

"My father was back in his own country. The Legion was fighting all over this hill-country against the Army of Navarre, the Carlists; it was like home

to him. Nobody knew he was here. He had run away after a duel, you see. It was about a girl, as usual. And now he was back, older and different, a big man. They called him Don Jorge, and because he knew all the hill roads, he was useful. There was killing everywhere, as there is killing today. A hundred years ago, in 1836, it was the same."

His voice drifted out and died on meditation. In the silence, our horses were snorting uneasily in the shed against the wall. We rolled fresh cigarettes and poured more wine.

"A fine fellow, Don Jorge; they all said so," resumed the old rascal. "He and his friends in the Legion suffered. No pay, no provisions, no support. The day came when fifty men of the First company, and a squadron of the lancers, were sent to occupy the village of Taraburi. It is over yonder in the next valley. We shall go through it tomorrow morn-

ing. An important place in its position. My father had come from there, and now he was bound there again, and he wondered if the people would know him. Bad luck if they did, for they hated the Legion anyway, and would hold him as a traitor. But he acted as guide, and Captain Breval joked with him and with Captain Korski of the lancers—joked with him about El Picador."

His voice drifted away once more. The moon was high and cold outside, high and white as it had been on that night a hundred years ago, when distant voices of wolves made the horses fidget uneasily, and men joked about El Picador.

ONLY the Legion, swinging along the lonely hill trail, would jest about that Carlist rascal—about El Picador and his lance, and his ravaging hell-bent crew, who strung up every man of the Legion they captured, and thrust him through with the lance, neatly but horribly. It was one of the horror stories that have hovered above the Spanish hills since the days of Napoleon.

Not that they were to be blamed, you understand, or the Legion either; retaliation sprang quick and sharp, as it does today. Then as now, men had a cause, and slaughtered for it with relentless ferocity. When men have a cause, they become gods, and do the work of devils—which is rather the same thing, when you reflect that Satan came from heaven originally.

So jested Captain Breval as he rode through the cold night, Korski at his stirrup, and Don Jorge striding along between them.

"Look out that this Picador doesn't catch you, Don Jorge!" said Breval, with a laugh. "*Ma foi*, I'd like to see the two of you at it! They say he's a big fellow like you."

"Give me a chance at him, *mon capitaine*, and you'll see something." Don Jorge showed his white teeth through his beard, as he laughed. "But no danger. From what I hear, it's quiet enough in these parts. Another half-mile, and the road widens; then it's a straight shoot down to the valley and the village."

On ahead, scout videttes clattered. Behind, the column slogged, more lancers in the rear. Queer men, these Legionnaires; not the men who had left Africa behind. If the Spaniards had forgotten to feed or pay, they had also forgotten to clothe. The Legion had to take its uniform, like everything else, from the enemy: strange

flat bérêts, like Scotch tam-o'-shanters; leather cartridge-pouches at their belts, pouches destined to make the Legion famous in later years; huge leather musette-bags slapping their hips; Spanish *espadrilles* replacing their French boots.

Don Jorge, peering at the scattered village lights far below, was thankful for the uniform, the heavy reddish brown beard, the powerful frame; no one would recognize the stripling of two years ago. His heart leaped to every twist of the road, to every hill crest in the moonlight. Was Ysadora still there? Had she forgotten him in these two years, or perhaps married another?

"Halt!"

The word rang. One of the lancers was waiting. In grim silence he extended his long iron-tipped lance. Captain Breval and others pushed forward to where a great oak partly overhung the road. A mutter grew and spread. A thing was hanging there, slowly spinning on a rope. Into the moonlight its face turned. The mutter increased.

"It's Private Sablonowski," spoke out Captain Korski. "He was captured in that scrimmage last week—unhorsed and taken. What the devil!"

A paper with a scrawl was pinned to the dead man's back. "*El Picador!*" Nothing more. No more needed.

NO more jesting about El Picador now, as the column went on, with parties scouting the way. So El Picador was here, in these parts, had left this sign as a warning to the Legion! Captain Breval spoke quietly to Don Jorge.

"You know these people; you can talk with them. With the morning, you're relieved of all duty. See what you can learn about this Picador fellow—who he is, where he comes from, whether he's around here. Understood?"

Don Jorge assented.

Yet after all, these people were his own people. El Picador he could hate savagely for his cruelty; not these people here, in his own village. He was not back here from choice, but by order. He was not fighting Spaniards by choice. However, El Picador was a monster—easy enough to string up that devil if he were caught! And his brother might tell him something: his brother Miguel, who would be living at the old homestead of their father just beyond the village. His own flight had let Miguel inherit everything; they had never been downright enemies, although no great



Ysadora herself! He could feel his heart pounding as she looked him in the eyes, as she passed on.

love had been lost between them. Well, tomorrow would tell!

With morning, he strode up the well-remembered street, a stranger here. Few men in the town; the women, the old men, cursed the French. No Spanish troops had come along—this was a quick

stroke to prepare the advance coming later....

Angry eyes, blank looks, met Don Jorge. He could have called this one and that one by name, had he chosen; he knew every one of those he passed; but none knew him. The troops, with outposts placed, had scattered, billeted on



"I regret to inform you that I have been billeted upon you," said Don Jorge.

the place, commandeering food and drink and quarters.

On through the last houses—ah, that was the house of Ysadora! He caught his breath; he halted: there was Ysadora herself, coming toward him. Older, more lovely, a black lace shawl about her fine head. He could feel his heart pounding as she came, as she looked him in the eyes, as she passed on. With an effort, he did not look back, after one last side-long glance. If she still loved him, he muttered, she would have known him again. Two years—well, at least she was unmarried! Perhaps, though, she loved another now.

He went his way to the lonely old house on ahead, the house of the Roca family that had been. Now it was desolate and gloomy and unkempt. There was an old servant sweeping before the door—old Pedro. The heart of Don Jorge warmed as he looked at the wrinkled face, but Pedro stared blankly at him, in open terror.

"Is Don Miguel here?" inquired Don Jorge. The old man nodded, shrinking from him, crossing himself furtively.

"Inside," he croaked. "Inside. Come."

He scurried in. His thin voice cried: "Don Miguel! A foreigner here—one of the accursed French. He asks for you—he will burn the house and murder us—"

Laughing, Don Jorge waited. Laughing, Don Miguel came—a stalwart man like himself, his face shaven except for mustache and side-whiskers. Don Jorge stared at the face. His own face, had his beard been so trimmed! His own face—except, perhaps, for a glint in the eyes that was not his: a glint of craft and cruelty.

"Well, señor?" asked Don Miguel politely. He was well dressed; a gold ring glittered on his finger, a heavy gold ring with an old crest cut in it. Their father's ring. Curious how white that powerful face was, thought Don Jorge; not the face of one who served under the African sun all the long day. Curious—

Something jerked at him. All in an instant, his whole course of action was changed: the words on his lips died; the recognition in his heart was stifled. This man did not know him, did not suspect his identity! Yet except for the beard, they were alike as two peas.

Don Jorge bowed. "Señor, I regret to inform you that I have been billeted upon your house," he said. "I am Private Murieta of the Foreign Legion."

"Indeed? It is an honor that I am given a guest who speaks our tongue so well," said Don Miguel politely. "The house, señor, is yours; all in it is yours. I have but the one old servant; I place him at your disposal. Pedro! Show the señor to the spare room; he is our guest." He bowed to Don Jorge. "You will excuse me? I am engaged with the village notary—I am to be married next week. I beg you, consider the entire place as your own. It is a great honor."

AS Don Jorge tramped up the creaky stairs behind Pedro, he wondered. White features—yes. His own features would be white as those, did he rid him-

self of this beard. Too white, too white! And the politeness, the welcome to a hated Frenchman, the glint in the eye! He knew that glint of old, he knew what it boded.

"Thank the Lord, I did not speak first!" he muttered in French, and turned to old Pedro, as he glimpsed the room assigned him. A corner room, the room that had been his own in past years, until his flight. He, who should be master of this place!

"So your name is Pedro?" he said gruffly. "Come, I am a friend. Your master is to be married, he tells me. Some lucky girl in the town?"

"But yes, yes, caballero," stammered the old man. "Doña Ysadora Prieta—"

DON JORGE recalled nothing more. Somehow he got rid of Pedro, was alone, and sank on the bed. Two years were swept away; the room around him just as it had been, fetched him back to himself, as he had been. The thought of Ysadora, the face of her, burned at him. Miguel to marry her? And the mud on Miguel's boots?

Riding-boots, fine leather boots; but splashed with mud. That, and the white face, had checked his words. Curious, with what a shock they had been checked! He looked around the room again, and presently sighed, laid aside his belongings, and went down into the sunlight. Old Pedro was there, warming himself, and Don Jorge gave him a cigarette and a smile. He caught the almost frightened stare of the old man, and his brows lifted.

"Well? What is it, Pedro?"

"The saints forgive me, señor! I thought for a moment you must be of this house. The look in your face—"

"A Frenchman of this house? Nonsense! So Don Miguel has not been at home much of late, eh?"

"The less the better," muttered Pedro, with a proverb none too polite that made Don Jorge chuckle in his beard. "Ah, he's not like his brother, the dead one! Young Don Sebastian would have been the true Roca for you; a caballero of the old blood, that one! But he's dead and gone."

"And your master is marrying. So the lady is in love with him, eh?"

Pedro shrugged and evaded direct response, suddenly suspicious of questions, conscious that he spoke with a Frenchman, an enemy. The whole country hereabouts was all for Don Carlos.



"The house, señor," said Don Miguel politely, "is yours; all in it is yours."

Looking over the place, Don Jorge glanced into the ramshackle stables, where two unkempt and shaggy horses were tied. One, a powerful beast, had recently been washed down and curried, but none too carefully. Along the hoofs, Don Jorge could see welts of that same yellow mud, caked hard.

Thoughtfully he went into the village again, and so to his headquarters. The hideous twisted shape of Private Sablonowski lay ready for proper burial. Don Jorge uncovered the corpse. The worn brogans and legs were heavily splashed with that same mud, whose peculiar color

came only from the vale of Zuburi, twenty miles away, Don Jorge knew.

He went his way, avoiding any talk with those who had known Don Sebastian Roca in the old days; now, above all things, he did not want recognition. Not that it was likely, if his own brother and old Pedro did not know him again. Still, he was taking no chances. Miguel was with El Picador, knew who that slaughterer was, belonged to that murderous crew; of this he was convinced.

It was like Miguel, he thought, to play the fine gentleman, be most polite to the French, and steal out on guerrilla raids with a few days' growth of beard to mask his features. Home again, a quick shave and change of clothes, and no suspicion. Most of the townsfolk would know it, naturally; they would be proud of Don Miguel, the patriot who helped to slaughter the hated French! Things were done that way, in Spain.

But Don Miguel was his brother. No getting around that. And Don Jorge, to be blunt about it, sympathized wholly with the rebels who fought for Don Carlos, and with his own people here. Certainly he had not enlisted to fight against his own brethren. He had been pitchforked into it with the Legion, against his will.

"Which was a dirty trick," he reflected later, as he strolled about sunning himself and eying Don Miguel Roca. The latter was talking pleasantly with Captain Breval, and allowing Tonto to paint his portrait. Tonto, formerly of the Belgian battalion, was an acknowledged artist—the only one in the Legion—and did excellent portrait work.

Don Jorge smoked, watched the scene, and balanced duty against honor.

"I don't love Miguel, but he's my brother," he reflected. "I don't love the cause I fight for, but it's my duty. If I could do it honorably, I'd be under arms for Don Carlos and the patriots this minute; but I can't. El Picador may be a patriot, but he's a damned scoundrel; I'd love nothing better than to get my sword into that murderous rat who tortures my comrades. Certainly, I sha'n't go snitching on Miguel, even if he does have everything that should be mine—"

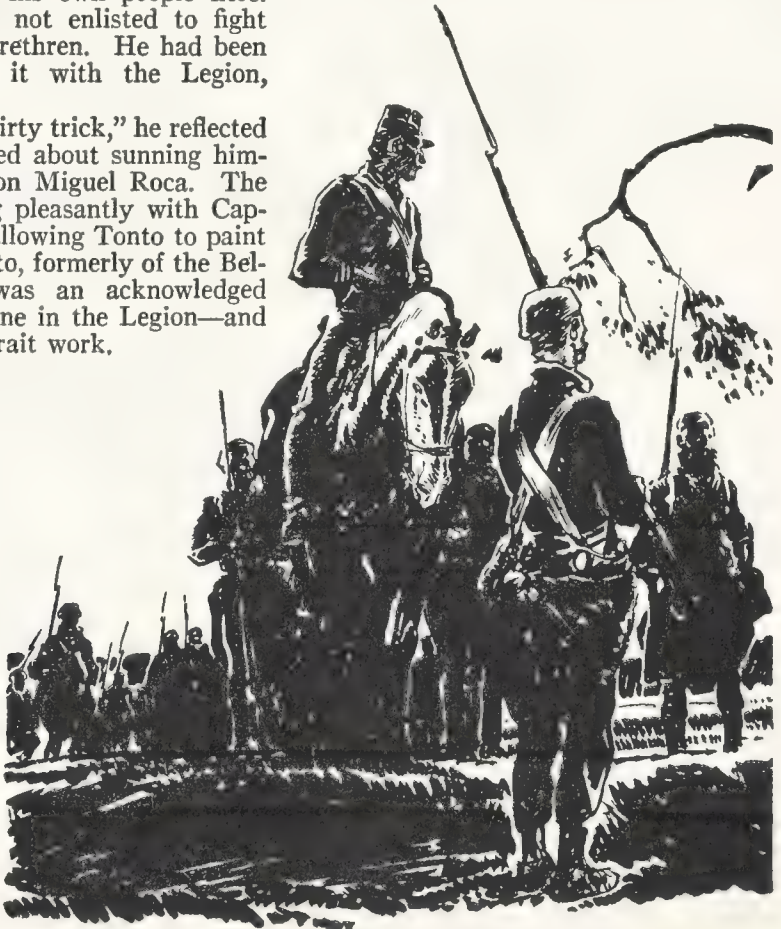
No, the scales swung about level. He could make up his mind to nothing.

Suddenly the balance swung. Late that afternoon he was watching the squadron of lancers drill, enjoying his own absolute freedom from duty. Clusters of the townsfolk were scattered about, but none close by. Then he heard his own name spoken softly.

"Sebastian!"

Startled, he glanced around. Ysadora stood there looking calmly at him, and

Two men of an outpost had been stabbed; a third was strung up and pierced by the mutilating lance of El Picador, in horrible fashion.



his heart turned over. He was unable to speak, to move, to think.

"I knew you when we met this morning," she said quietly. "The figure may change; the face may be hidden; youth may become man: but the eyes do not change. Have you no word for me? Have you forgotten me?"

"*Dios!*" he gasped. His voice was dry, husky. "Could I ever forget? But I'm not the one who is being married next week."

SHE came closer to him, unsmiling, cold, proud. But behind icy pride was seething emotion; if it did not show in her voice, he could read it in her great dark eyes, burning under the lace shawl and the wealth of silky hair.

"And whose fault is that?" she asked quietly. "You were dead. Miguel had the proofs of your death. Before you died, you had married an Arab woman in Algiers—"

"What?" he cried, and a flash leaped in his eyes. "No, no! Miguel would not lie about that! My death perhaps, but

not my honor. He'd not put me to shame!"

"Well, he did," she said slowly, looking into his face. "It was a lie, then?"

"A lie," said Don Jorge, breathing hard. "An accursed lie!"

"And yet your honor is not so clean and white," she said bitterly. "You're in French uniform. You're killing your own people, Sebastian. And you a Roca! There, at least, Miguel is a step ahead of you."

"True," he replied. "But I'm doing something. He's merely living at home, getting married, enjoying our father's wealth!"

If he thought to tempt some utterance out of her, he was mistaken. She only looked at him and laughed; she was wary, this girl. Spanish blood may be all fire, but only when the ice is broken.

"Then," he said, "you love Miguel now?"

Her bosom rose and fell sharply at the question. "I do not," she said. "But I



would sooner marry him than a Roca who wears the uniform of an enemy."

With this, she turned and left him; and when he passed her again in the street, she looked at him as though she had never seen him in her life. French uniform or not, his secret was safe with her; he knew this.

SO Miguel had not only lied, but had spattered his name with mud! Almost did this tip the balance; almost, not quite. Don Jorge was a true Roca. There was steel in him. His brother was a scoundrel, but this would not excuse a blot on his own honor; and if he betrayed this brother to the French, it would be a blot in his own sight that he could never remove. This thought tipped the scales back again.

That same night, Don Jorge lay long awake.

From boyhood, he knew the creak of the old stairs; he heard them creak as he lay, but no light showed. He went to the window. A horse was led out of the stables and away. He went into the room his brother Miguel occupied; no Miguel there. With a shrug, Don Jorge went back to bed; but in the morning he did not shrug. Miguel was here again, affable and polite. At the edge of town, however, two men of an outpost lay stabbed; a third, who had been captured, was strung up and pierced by the mutilating lance of El Picador, in rather horrible fashion.

Captain Breval, furious, sent for Don Jorge, who was equally furious. This man pricked to death had been his chief friend in the Legion.

"The enemy are nowhere near, but El Picador is," snapped Breval. "Well? Have you learned anything?"

"I'm on the track of something," said Don Jorge, a growl in his throat.

"Good! You're safer than any of us, in that house; won't have your throat cut there. Don Miguel is a splendid fellow. Well, get some news quickly!"

"Within two days, *mon capitaine*."

A splendid fellow, yes; he was the perfect host at dinner that evening, fluent and courtly, while old Pedro served them. Don Jorge studied him. No need of a muffling beard, now that the work was close at hand. The unshaven face was only for longer rides. There was a bandage under the right leg of his pantaloons; he walked a trifle stiffly. One of those three dead men had left a mark on one of El Picador's crew, evidently.

"Do you know, Don Jorge," said Don Miguel in his stately Castilian, "there's something hauntingly familiar about you. I can't quite place it."

Don Jorge, who was careful not to use his own voice around here, grinned in his beard.

"You compliment me! But I've never been out of Galicia in my life, until I enlisted with the French. A health to the king—yours or mine!"

A man had come into the kitchen; his voice sounded, was gone again. Presently old Pedro, removing the dishes, spoke softly to his master in the local Catalan patois. Don Jorge caught the words: "*Midnight. Spring of the Dead.*" Don Miguel merely nodded carelessly and went on talking about literature.

Ojo del Muerto! Don Jorge knew that lonely little spot, only two miles outside town. The Dead Man's Spring. A tiny little fountain, dignified by local legends from old Moorish days. Loving couples used to go there. Romance was all around it, but no buildings were near by. It was a lonely fountain in a lonely little valley. Midnight, eh? El Picador had appointed that meeting-place for another murder raid, perhaps. . . .

Don Miguel had bought the portrait painted by Tonto, and surveyed it with vast admiration; it was an excellent likeness too, though it flattered his strong features a trifle, and failed to catch the odd glint in his eye.

HALF an hour later, Don Jorge was talking low-voiced with Captain Breval. He gave his information, or rather his guess, without saying how he had come by it.

"You know the place? You can guide us there?"

"Certainly, *mon capitaine*. And I have one request to ask. I may be wrong, but I have reason to think that in El Picador's company is a man who is my own brother. Let him chance the risks; but if he should be captured, I ask for his life."

Captain Breval frowned. After all, this man of his was a Spaniard.

"Granted; that'll clear your conscience, eh?"

"Perfectly, *mon capitaine*."

"Then pick twenty men. Carbines, sabers, pistols to each man. Be ready in an hour's time. I'll join you in front of the church. Take the best horses."

The Polish lancers grumbled, but yielded up their horses on demand.

Midnight; in the clear sky a high-sailing white moon.

The small glade was open, but thickly grown on all sides by huge ancient oaks. Against the hillside was a little broken shrine; there the fountain bubbled.

By twos and threes, men collected here toward midnight. Shaggy figures, men of the mountains, each man with his fusil. A dozen of them in all, standing around and talking, smoking, waiting. Suddenly a murmur went up.

"El Capitan! El Picador!"

IT was El Picador himself who came now, riding a powerful horse; a large-bulking figure, massive, cloaked, huge hat pulled over his head, and in his hand the long lance with glittering point which gave him his nickname. Without dismounting, he waved a hand—

The brush on the hillside crackled. Men faced about, muskets swung up.

"Surrender!" ordered a voice. "Surrender, and—"

A musket crashed; a yell went up. From the oak trees flashed spurts of flame, jets of smoke. Half the band were wiped out at that volley. The others fought savagely, silently—asking no quarter. But not El Picador.

With one flying leap of his horse, El Picador was gone ere the first discharge rang out—gone at a gallop, leaning over in the saddle. He lurched wildly, almost fell, caught himself.

A moment later Don Jorge, not awaiting the result of the ambush, sped away in his own saddle, following that massive leaping shape as it lessened. He knew the hill trails, he knew for which one of them El Picador was making. The crash of shots fell away into dim echoes as he spurred among the trees. Two or three others were after him, but he left them behind. Even Captain Breval fell back as the oak-branches whipped his face and threatened to unhorse him.

A mile fell behind. Don Jorge was closing up now; he had El Picador clear in his vision, was not fifty feet behind. A yelp broke from him.

"Halt and fight it out!" He was using the Catalan patois in his excitement. "Halt, you murdering devil—"

El Picador drew rein and wheeled his horse, lance leveled.

"Who are you?" he shouted, leaning forward and peering at Don Jorge. "Why, the saints upon you! You! You!"

The big hat had fallen away. Don Jorge, his carbine ready, sat his panting

horse and stared. His brother—Don Miguel! And now, by his voice, Miguel knew him.

"So *you* are El Picador!" Don Jorge exclaimed, reeling under the shock of it. "You, Miguel—a gentleman by day, a murderous slayer by night!"

"And you, Sebastian!" The other broke into a hoarse laugh. "No wonder you seemed so familiar, eh? And pretending to speak only Castilian, with your damned lisp and your talk of Galicia—*arrgh!* Sneaking in and spying on me!"

The lance leveled, he struck in spurs and came like a thunderbolt. His left hand whipped up a pistol; it exploded—the bullet fanned the face of Don Jorge. The latter felt his carbine discharged, almost without his own volition; his frightened horse reared and took the shock of the charging horseman, took the lance in the throat. . . . Then they were both down in a wild jumble of hoofs and death.

Only the horse of El Picador came out of that jumble, shivering and standing motionless, rolling a wild eye at the thing dragging from one stirrup. Don Jorge rolled over and scrambled to his feet. His horse was dying, the lance still fast in the poor brute's throat. He himself was unhurt. But his brother—

After a moment he straightened up and crossed himself, and murmured a prayer. The guilt, the blame, was not his; the stern steel of the Roca conscience had no spot. He had not even aimed that carbine, yet the heavy ball had shattered the whole face of Don Miguel, had killed him instantly. Another ball had been in him also—that alone would have killed him in an hour more, for the hurt was mortal. . . . No, there could be no blame here.

Then, suddenly, Don Jorge started, stirred into life and action.

FIFTEEN minutes later Captain Breval and two of his men rode up to the spot. There was nothing in sight except the dead horse and the dead man. They dismounted, and a torrent of hot curses lifted on the moonlight. Captain Breval looked at the uniform of the Legion, the slumped figure whose face was black with blood, and turned away with a shiver.

"Poor Don Jorge!" he said. "A fine fellow; he'd have been a corporal tomorrow, if he'd lived. No use going after that damned El Picador now—we can't

find him on these hill trails. Put Jorge into a saddle, and double up; by the Lord, we'll give him a Legionnaire's burial, at least!"

Captain Breal did not feel too badly about it. If he had missed El Picador, he had bagged most of El Picador's outfit, who were left to the kites. Don Jorge was taken into the village, and was buried next morning with full military ceremonies.

Don Miguel attended the funeral, as did many others. He was freshly shaven, and was dressed in his best, and expressed himself with great courtesy to the officers; the death of his guest left him very sad, and he brought a huge wreath of flowers for the grave. After the ceremony, he sent for Tonto, and asked him to do another portrait, to which the grinning Tonto agreed gladly.

On his way home, Don Miguel came face to face with Ysadora. He saluted her with the formal courtesy of a hidalgo; she was white to the lips as she stared at him.

"What does it mean—all of it?" she demanded fiercely.

Don Miguel twisted his mustache and smiled.

"You have, of course, heard that these accursed French ambuscaded a number of guerrillas last night? And one of them has just been buried yonder—"

"None of your sardonic jokes, Miguel!" she broke in. "Yes, I've heard; and I've heard which man it was. Why, you devil! I believe you knew all the time that man was your own brother Sebastian—oh, you heartless fiend!"

DON MIGUEL smiled again and looked her in the eyes.

"My dear Doña Ysadora, may I offer you my arm? A little promenade in the warm sunlight—yes? I wish to discuss with you my plans for action against the French. I may confide in you that in future they are going to be more like the actions of a soldier, less like those of a murderer."

Even her lips had whitened now. She stood shaking, overcome by so powerful a thrust of emotion that but for his supporting arm she might have fallen.

Don Miguel laughed softly.

"So the eyes never change, eh? Nor the heart either—with some men."

Her fingers clung to his arm. After a moment she uttered low words.

"And I—I never knew the difference. I thought you were Miguel—you have his air, his carriage—all but his eyes."

"For that I may thank the good God, and our worthy father," said the young man cheerfully.

"And by the way, I'm having another portrait of myself painted by that Legion artist. That will make two portraits of your husband, to delight your eyes."

THE wolves howled again on the cold moonlight, the horses stirred. My wrinkled old Gaspenjo rolled a fresh cigarette and lit it from the embers of the fire. He leaned back and puffed contentedly.

"So that's the story," he said. "Don Miguel did fight the French very honorably, and lost his money and lands because Don Carlos was beaten, so that in the end this barren place was all he had left. But it was enough. And in his later years he begat me, who am the last of the Roca family."

"I thought your name was Gaspenjo?" I said curiously.

He shrugged.

"Oh, that's another story," he said in dismissal.

"But you mentioned pictures—portraits of your father and your uncle. Not the same ones this Tonto, of the Legion, painted?"

"The same ones, señor," he said. "Poor Tonto, my father used to say, died like a brave man. He died at Barrastro when the Legion, reduced to a single battalion, was practically wiped out, and their colonel with them."

He rose, opened a cupboard, and took out two portraits in cheap frames which he handed me. He stirred the fire a bit, and by the flickering light I looked at them.

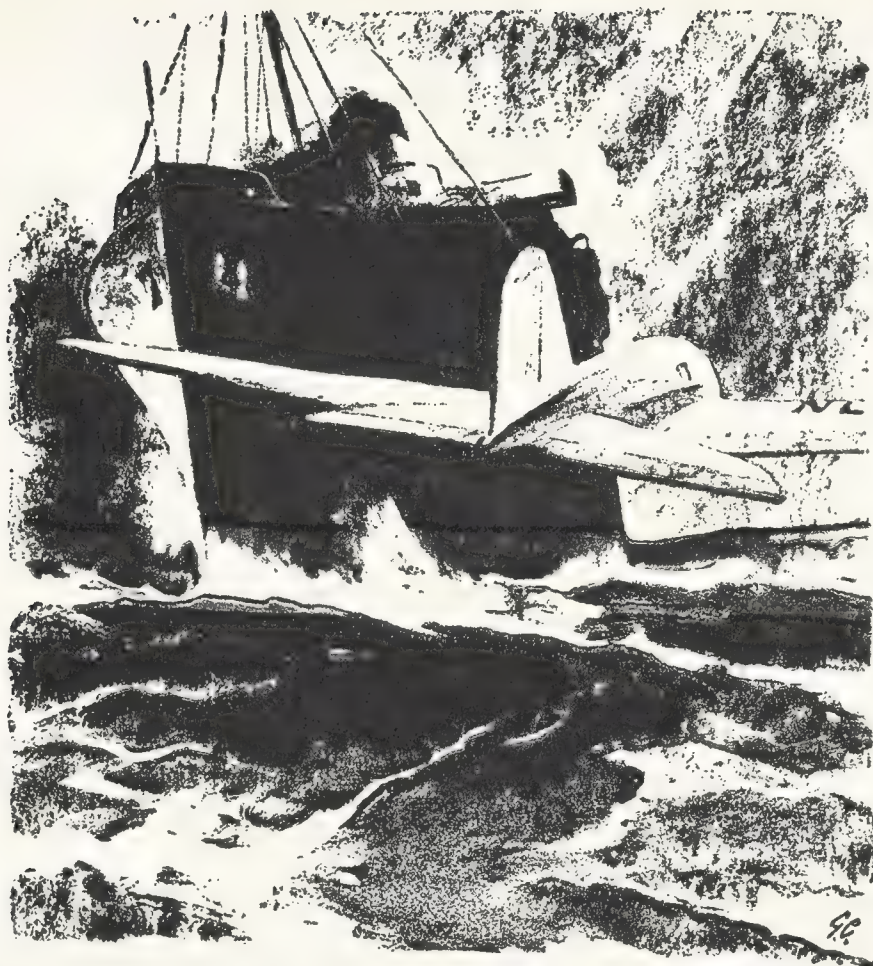
They were assuredly not art. Each one showed a grim, powerful face with mustache and sideburns, a face abounding in vitality, energy, even cruelty. The two faces were identical so far as I could see.

"Which of them," I asked, "is your father—which your uncle?"

Old Gaspenjo hitched up his shoulders, sucked at his cigarette, and replied with the eternally hopeless and careless response of his country:

"*Quién sabe?* Well, perhaps the good God knows; but I don't. After all, what does it matter?"

Another spirited story in this brilliant historical series will appear in our forthcoming September issue.



Three Over Deep Water

A favorite writer who is also a professional pilot contributes the vivid story of a strange and hazardous flight.

By **LELAND JAMIESON**

Illustrated by Grattan Condon

I HAVE always said, I will never fly the Atlantic Ocean. It is entirely too big an ocean; there is too much water there that you can fall into. It is very, very cold water, and exceedingly deep, as I can tell you from personal experience—which in my life, it seems, is the only kind of experience that ever does me much good. But recently I have had to change my stand in this important matter. Now I say, I will never *again* fly the Atlantic Ocean. . . .

There was nothing exciting happening to me, that day when J. S. came into my office. It was April, with a leaden rain slanting steadily out of low clouds, turning the airport into a bog. The ceiling was two hundred feet, which is no ceiling to let students go out and fly under—at least not in my airplanes. My month's statements were spread out on my desk, and I was pretty discouraged with trying to be a giant of finance. You cannot be a giant of finance with no money.



So I was just sitting there, smoking a cigarette and trying to think without worrying. The door opened, and there stood J. S. That was J. S. Van Osdol, of the Van Osdol Oil Company. I was glad to see him, although I owed him something like six hundred dollars and fifty-nine cents, and it was past due.

He stood inside the doorway, a large man with brindle hair, wearing a gruff look on his big square face. He was wet.

I said, "Hello, J. S. Come in out of the rain."

He took off his hat and flung water from it in a fine spray over the floor. He said, "Hello, Slim." Then he said, "Slim, do you know an aviator by the name of Wilbur Buckingham, from the Coast?"

"No," I said. "What's he done—sold you something?"

J. S. grunted and sat down by my desk. He mopped his face with a fine brown linen handkerchief. "Well," he said, "it begins to look like it. You know Madeline. Madeline has gone and got herself engaged to marry this guy."

It took a second or two for this to soak in; it was a shock. Because, you see, for a long time I had had hopes about Made-

line Van Osdol myself. But I said only: "Well, whoever he is, if Madeline picked him, he must be a pretty good sort of guy, don't you think?"

J. S. grunted again, and lighted a long black cigar. He said: "He checks up all right so far. He's all right. I like him. I just thought you could tell me what kind of a flyer he was."

But I had never heard of Wilbur Buckingham. So we talked about Madeline for a while, and then about the oil business, and finally I asked, "When are you going to start that aviation department I've been outlining? You're losing good business. And I'm starving to death, running a flying-school."

For a minute he looked down at the floor. He puffed out his lips thoughtfully, and said: "Slim, this may change things around some; I don't know." Then he got up suddenly. "But look here, maybe we still can work something out. Run out for dinner tomorrow evening and we'll talk about it."

"Will Madeline be there?"

"Sure she'll be there," he said. "She'll show you this Buckingham fellow of hers."

"I get it," I said. "You've looked him over, and now you want me to. Well, nothing doing. What if I thought he was phony? You'd never stop Madeline."

J. S. laughed heartily. He said: "If you can prove he's a phony, you'll be running my aviation department the first of the month."

I guess I must have been touchy that afternoon; I had been worrying. "That's it," I snapped, getting sore. "I sell you the idea of an aviation department, and you hold out for a son-in-law! The hell with you!"

J. S. grinned. "Nobody but you would be fool enough to turn down twenty-five grand without looking at it. That's what—"

"Twenty-five grand?" I yelled. "Why didn't you say something about it?"

"You better show up about seven," he said, and ducked out to his car.

OF course it is nothing miraculous for a girl to fall in love with somebody, and get engaged. Knowing Madeline, I could understand how this business could happen. I could understand, too, that no man had picked her; she had done all the picking, and J. S. need not worry about having some fortune-hunter dished up as his son-in-law. But just so, now that she had decided to marry, he was

not going to have a whole lot to say in the matter. He did not have much to say about anything Madeline did; she was headstrong and reckless, but she was no chump.

And this worried J. S.—this business of marriage. He wanted a son-in-law who could eventually run the Van Osdol Oil Company.

I DROVE out to his place the next evening, wondering what Madeline would be like, now. I felt pretty low, to think what was happening. The first six or eight months I had been back in Oklahoma City, she had come out to the airport a lot, and made me fly her around—she was wild about flying. She had wanted to experience every stunt in the catalog. I gave her the works. But it had been a year, now, since I had seen her; she had been abroad most of that time, and in California.

She had not changed much. She had a new way of dressing her hair; it was a straw-yellow, all curls, pulled back so that it made her round face seem thinner and longer. Seeing her made me feel better; it always did. She had the same smile, the same flashing white teeth, the same bright light in her greenish eyes.

She grabbed my hands, as if she were really glad and excited to see me again. "Johnny!" she cried—she never called me Slim, for some reason.

"Hello, smart guy," I said. "You look as if Paris and California did well by you. You're a knock-out!"

"Am I?" Madeline said. "You haven't changed much, either, have you?"

"Not about you, kitten, I haven't. I guess I just can't. Well, where's this fellow I'm to congratulate?"

Madeline laughed delightedly. "Oh, don't bother about him," she said. "Congratulate *me*!"

"So that's the way it is. Well, congratulations, kid."

Just then, over her shoulder, I saw a tall, good-looking lad coming in from J. S.'s library. He was about twenty-six or -seven, two or three years younger than I was; he had a good chin, and level gray eyes. Madeline took his arm, and looked up at him with a kind of pleased, happy look, as if just being close to him made her feel better than anything else in the world.

"Wilbur," she said, "this is Johnny McGuff."

Wilbur and I shook hands, and stood there a minute talking, and finally sat

down on the sofa. And gradually I found out about him. He had been with Byrd in the Antarctic for a year, and after that had come back to the States and gone on a lecture tour. But it seemed he was in the wrong business, on that tour; nobody would come to his lectures. So he went to Hollywood to try to be a stunt man in the movies, flying.

"But the only success I had in Hollywood," he smiled, "was that I met Madeline. And that wasn't in an airplane. I met her when she fell off a horse."

About that time J. S. zoomed in. I shook hands with him, and he went over and clapped Wilbur on the shoulder and said: "Hyar you, Buck?"

I saw Wilbur stiffen. Madeline said, with some heat: "Daddy! I wish you would stop calling him that!"

J. S.'s laugh roared through the room. "What's the matter with that?" he demanded. Then he announced enthusiastically: "Blew in our number two Chandler this evening. Thirty-three thousand barrels!" He turned back to Wilbur. "Buck, Slim used to be an air-mail pilot—seven thousand hours, Chicago to New York. But he got to flying an automobile blind one night and flew into a culvert."

"I can only see about twenty-fifty out of one eye," I explained. "So I'm back where I started ten years ago."

Wilbur said, "That's certainly tough! Won't an air line let a pilot fly on a waiver?"

"Not with my vision. They're funny about blinkers."

"But Wiley Post flew around the world twice on only *one* eye!"

Just then J. S. slapped his hand down on his knee. He turned to Wilbur and said: "Son, I've got it!" Then he grabbed Wilbur's arm and dragged him off toward the library.

MADELINE laid her head back on the sofa and looked up at the ceiling. She said, "I'll bet this is going to be good. They've been cooking up something about an aviation department for days."

"Yeah," I said. "I know. Buck—"

Madeline sat up instantly. "Johnny McGuff, if you start calling him that too, I'll scratch out your eyes!" Then she smiled, and inquired: "How do you like him?"

"Buck?" I said. "Well, now—"

She jabbed me hard in the ribs. Grinning, I said: "Any guy who would marry

you is nuts, Van Osdol. Of course, it wouldn't be hard to fall in love with a lot of oil-wells, but—"

"Oh, shut up!" Madeline snapped. "You never did have a brain in your head."

"I guess that's one reason I've been in love with you all my life."

She tried to look very severe. "Johnny, sometimes I actually hate you!"

THEN J. S. and Wilbur came back. J. S. was holding Wilbur's arm, and had a grin on his face as if he had just sold a lease for a profit of one million dollars. He slapped me on the back. "Slim, I'm starting that aviation sales department, and you've got a job. Buck's going to head the staff. He's a good flyer, but he doesn't have a big enough name yet to do us much good. So we give him a build-up. You and Buck take a fast plane and set records—"

I said dryly: "What do I do—go along for the ride?"

J. S. chuckled. "Of course, you'll do the flying, but Buck gets the publicity. We'll panic 'em by having you fly to Paris and back in forty-eight hours." He clapped his hand down on my shoulder again. "Boy," he exclaimed, "you can do this!"

"Yeah," I said. "Maybe I can. But I'm not going to."

J. S. went right on. "I pay you twenty-five grand for this ocean hop, and a salary of ten grand a year for your job. Listen to me, boy—"

I said: "I'm not flying any Atlantic oceans. All you need is for an engine to quit, and you're down in the drink—plunk!"

"Motors don't quit, nowadays," Wilbur said.

"Yeah? Well, I'm not flying the Atlantic. The last time an engine quit me I fell into Lake Erie, the coldest night—"

"I'll make that fifty thousand," J. S. growled, "if you get to Paris and back in seventy-two hours. The Van Osdol Oil Company will get that much publicity."

"No," I said.

J. S. got up and went into the library. Wilbur and Madeline and I sat there. Pretty soon Madeline broke the silence. She said, very softly: "Sissy!" Then she jumped up in excitement. "I'll tell you what," she exclaimed recklessly. "I'll go with you—Johnny, this is one thing we never did try, with an airplane! It ought to be fun!"

I gave her a withering look that had no effect. "You're nuts, Van Osdol," I said. "If you must drown yourself, go jump in the creek."

Then J. S. came in again, and held out a slip of paper to me. It was a check—a check for more money than I had seen since the old days of night mail. I swallowed twice, blinking. And right then I knew I was in for it. That check was too big. . . .

Well, during the next two weeks Wilbur and I got a lot of things done. We went to the Coast and bought a new plane, a single-engine, all-metal cabin job that would cruise, at twelve thousand feet, at a little better than two hundred and twenty. It had a range of five thousand miles.

To my surprise, I got along pretty well with Wilbur. Of course, I resented him. I was jealous. He had my job, and he was getting my girl. But he was not such a bad guy. He knew a lot of people on the Coast, and we went places together while the factory completed the gas-tank installation in our ship. There were things I did not like about him—he had a way of projecting himself and leaving you out of things, around other people—but this was only his way, I tried to tell myself, and was nothing to hold against him. His enthusiasm about his job was reassuring, his determination to earn publicity so that J. S. would realize his value was a little bit funny.

WE got our plane, and spent a couple of days flying up and down the Pacific Coast, checking gas-consumption and speed. And that second night we had an unexpected break of luck. An unusually deep "low" slipped down from Canada and started eastward across Nebraska. The weather was going to be lousy, I knew, but this was our chance for a fifty-mile tail-wind. We lit out for New York. I got myself beaten nearly to death in the rough air, flying blind hour after hour, but finally we broke out over Pennsylvania and streaked on to New York, a new trans-continental speed record under our belts. Wilbur was sick most of the way.

But there was nothing bothering him when we landed in New York. And it was there, on Floyd Bennett airport, that I got my first big surprise about Wilbur. We had no more than stopped rolling, when he was up at my shoulder, saying:

"Nice work, Johnny. Now I'll taxi her in."

"You'll what?" I said. I was deaf from the roar of the engine.

"I'll taxi her in."

Well, this was a publicity stunt—publicity for Wilbur. I was only a hired hand. So I shrugged, and said: "Okay, pal." We changed places, and Wilbur taxied up to the ramp.

PHOTOGRAPHERS and reporters surrounded the plane. The inevitable crowd moved in and swamped us. Wilbur, still in the cockpit, waved his hand and posed for close-ups. Then he got out, answering reporters' questions.

And I will say he answered them very well. He had a knack for description. He talked for four or five minutes, gesturing and smiling, good-naturedly, and then suddenly stopped. Because just then a taxicab swung onto the ramp, and out stepped Madeline Van Osdol. She was bareheaded; as she moved eagerly across the ramp to the fringe of the crowd, her yellow hair caught the light from the hangar floods. The lines of her face were lengthened by shadows, and she was beautiful. She pushed through and reached Wilbur.

"Darling!" she cried excitedly. "Why didn't you wire me? I didn't even know you'd started, until I heard on the radio that you were practically here!" She kissed him.

Wilbur said: "We just got here. I thought you were in Oklahoma. Say, now, this is swell!"

Madeline hugged his arm. "Isn't it?" she exclaimed. "Tired?"

"No," Wilbur laughed. "Why should I be? I can take it."

Then, after some more talking, and pictures and introductions all around, the three of us drove into town. Wilbur and I cleaned up, and took Madeline to dinner. I was dead tired, but Wilbur had a fresh, ruddy look of health that not very many pilots can achieve after a long day in a plane. He was very witty and gay. When Madeline, in the course of the evening, asked him if he had done much of the flying, he said:

"Not a great deal." Then he laughed, pointing at me. "I don't need to. I've got an automatic pilot. It's swell!"

"You must have made a nice landing," Madeline said. "I heard the reporters remarking about it."

"It wasn't so bad," Wilbur said, and gave me a wink. Then he changed the subject abruptly; there were, he observed, some good shows in town. Madeline al-

ways liked shows, or night-clubs, or any place where there might be excitement. So, since Wilbur's invitation did not include me, I went to bed. But for some time I could not go to sleep. I was worried.

The next morning Wilbur called me. He was tired of New York; he wanted to get under way. "Listen, Johnny," he said, "I'm in a sort of jam. I want to talk to you. How about breakfast?"

"Okay," I said. "Where's Madeline?"

"She's gone to Oklahoma," he said.

"I'll tell you about it."

When he came down to the lobby, he was very cordial; he touched my arm and guided me toward the grille.

I said: "For a guy in a jam, you don't look very unhappy."

He gave me a rueful grin, but did not say anything. We found a table. "Johnny," he said then, "women are nuts."

"Are they?"

"Madeline has got it in her head she's going to fly the Atlantic with us. She means it. I don't understand her—"

I suddenly felt a lot better. "You don't know her," I said. "You didn't grow up with her. Listen, when she and I were kids together in the Tonkawa field, before J. S. made all his money, I've seen her climb a hundred-foot derrick and slide down a guy-wire just for the kick of seeing whether or not she'd fall off! I've seen her ride all day on a nitroglycerine truck just because she got a kick out of seeing whether or not it would blow up! Why? I don't know why, but I know she's that way."

Wilbur lit a cigarette and took a drink of coffee. There was a puzzled look on his face. He screwed his eyebrows up into a frown and said: "We had a hell of an argument about this, and she went home. But she's not going to fly to Paris with us, I can tell you that!"

I shrugged. "It's your fight," I said.

"She'd add a hundred and ten pounds to our load. And what if something happened—what if we went down at sea?"

"She'd probably love it!" Then I said, kind of dry: "But motors don't quit, nowadays."

HIS eyes grew black. He wadded his napkin and threw it down on the table. "Well, at least I thought I'd have your support. After all—"

"After all," I snapped. "what have you ever done to get my support in anything? If there were anything I could do to stop her, maybe I would; but I know that

girl. If I were you, I'd let her go—unless you've been handing her more stuff about how you fly this plane—and don't want her to catch up with you."

Wilbur sat there and looked at me; he did not say anything. . . .

After that, our relations were somewhat strained. Yet that did not affect our flying; in the next few days we covered a good deal of territory at very high speed. We set new records between New York and Mexico City, Mexico City and Seattle, Seattle and Chicago. On the sixth day we were back in Oklahoma City, getting quite an ovation. J. S. had announced that we would hop to Paris, next. We had received plenty of publicity everywhere; but at home we were front-page, headline stuff.

J. S. had a delegation at the field to meet us. There was going to be a banquet right away in town, and a get-together at the University Club that night. Very hearty in his loud, bluff way, and very proud, J. S. shook our hands and slapped us on the backs and posed with us for pictures. Then he explained about the program for the day.

But Wilbur seemed totally uninterested in that. He waited a minute or two, then searched over the heads of the crowd, and said impatiently, "Where's Madeline?"

"She said she'd see you guys tonight," J.S. said. "Come on. You ready, Slim?"

"I'll stick around a few minutes and look after the ship."

When they had gone, I put the plane in the hangar and set mechanics at work on it. It was thirty minutes before I came out, feeling dead tired, in no mood for a banquet.

And then I got a very pleasant surprise. Madeline's roadster was parked there by the door, the top down, the door open. She laughed at my astonishment. "Well, go on and stare! I'm always turning up when nobody expects me. Get in."

It was peculiar how, just seeing her, I was not tired any more. "Lord, kid," I said, "you did grow up beautiful! Right now, when I look at you, I feel—"

She put the car in gear. "None of that, Mr. McGuff. I'm an engaged woman." She gave me a funny little grin, as if she might be secretly pleased. "Where to? Do you have to go to that silly banquet and advertise gasoline, really?"

I stretched my legs and lighted a cigarette. "I'm afraid so. I'm one of the help, you know—not a prospective son-

in-law. And look here, kitten—what about this?" Then I waited a second and said: "What's wrong between you and Wilbur?"

"None of your business." The car rolled silently over the highway. Then Madeline said: "Johnny, I want to ask

We went down—down;
it is incredible how fast
you lose altitude, when
an engine has quit.



you a purely hypothetical question: How much weight could you add to your plane, safely, on this flight to Paris? Or could you add any?"

"Oh," I said carelessly, "about a hundred and ten pounds."

She studied the road intently. "So Wilbur told you."

I shrugged. We stopped in front of the hotel, and Madeline sat there, both hands on the wheel, looking very thoughtful. I said: "This is more than just an idea of yours that you'd like to fly the Atlantic, isn't it?"



She made a little face. "You think you're smart, don't you?"

"Maybe I've known you too long," I grinned. "Long enough to know this isn't so much flying an ocean as getting things straight with Wilbur, right now, at the beginning."

"You're sweet, Johnny." She gave me a quick smile, and put the car in gear, holding in the clutch with a small slim foot. "What makes you so darn' wise?"

AND the next week, after I had flown to New York to make final preparations on the plane before we hopped off for Paris, I wondered how that little tableau would end. I decided that Wilbur was merely human after all, and that Madeline would achieve her own way with him, as usual.

But I was wrong about this, because one day Wilbur showed up—and he was alone. I tried to pump him with a few discreet questions, but he wouldn't talk.

Several days later came the weather conditions I had been waiting for. With everything ready to shove off next morning, I wrote Madeline a little note, kidding her about the superiority of the male. I mailed it, and went to bed. While I was still trying to get my mind off those three thousand miles of water, a bellboy knocked. He had a radiogram, sent from the liner *Normandie*, then nearing Havre—she had left New York four days before. The radiogram said:

AM ON WAY TO PARIS AND IF WILBUR
THINKS HE IS GOING TO KEEP ME FROM
FLYING FROM PARIS TO NEW YORK WITH
YOU HE WILL HAVE TO GET J S OVER HERE

QUICK STOP THEIR COMBINED BROWBEATING WORE ME DOWN THIS TIME THE BRUTES STOP BUT I AM COUNTING ON YOUR SUPPORT TO EXTENT OF HUNDRED AND TEN POUNDS STOP IS IT A DATE?

MADELINE

Grinning, I answered: "IT'S A DATE BUT YOU FURNISH YOUR OWN LIFE PRESERVER—JOHNNY."

Well, at five o'clock next morning Wilbur and I were at the airport. We were both jittery. We crawled into the plane, and I taxied down to the end of the runway and turned around to take off over the administration building.

I am not going to say much about that take-off. It is too painful even to remember—that feeling of having my heart in my throat, choking me. There we were, Wilbur sitting in the little seat in front of the enormous gas-tank, his face tense and a little pale—and I at the controls. My heart was pounding as I eased off on the brakes.

Then we were on our way, thundering down the runway. With all that load, I had trouble getting the tail up. For a minute the plane started to swerve and I was in a bad spot. We were going seventy miles an hour, the runway shortening with incredible rapidity ahead. I slammed on all the rudder I dared, leaving the throttle wide open. We lurched and came back on an even keel and bounced a little. I got the tail up.

And with a slow, dreadful effort, the wheels lifted and we were in the air. Then we were over the buildings—so narrowly that it seemed that the wing could not clear—breathlessly over them, with the air speed climbing very, very slowly—now at a hundred and twenty—thirty—forty. Cautiously, getting a deep lungful of air, I turned. And in another sixty seconds we were leveled out nicely, climbing ever so slowly, lifting that immense load of fuel and plane steadily out over the sea.

WE hugged the coast to Harbor Grace; after that, low clouds blanked out the cold gray rolling Atlantic; the air became chill. As night approached, I climbed to ten thousand feet, trying to get on top of the clouds. But I could not do that. For an hour we flew through an intense snow-storm—a storm which turned to sleet and then suddenly to freezing rain that put an inch of ice on our wings in a space of three minutes. That was a very bad moment; it looked

as if we would be forced down right there. But we found a layer of warmer air at a thousand feet, and the ice melted.

AT last the short night ended, with a marvelous sunrise through wind-tumbled cerise clouds. The weather was nice from there on. . . . That afternoon we sat down at Le Bourget airport in Paris.

After that there were the usual acclamations: a ride through crowded avenues, sitting in the open tonneau with Wilbur, feeling the faint warmth of a lovely Paris dusk in the springtime, and so elated that I seemed not in the least tired.

There was no time, however, to be wasted congratulating ourselves; we were to be back in New York within forty-eight hours if possible; if we were longer than seventy-two hours, I was going to lose a great deal of money. Paris was for me only a very short interlude from the strain of the cockpit. And next morning at ten o'clock the strain started again. Only now it was worse; the west-bound crossing was going to make the east-bound look like a horseback ride through Central Park.

All the way to the field, I kept wondering what had happened to Madeline. The *Normandie* had docked, and she had had plenty of time to get to Paris already.

The plane was outside the hangar, fully gassed, waiting. I went after my final weather reports as Wilbur walked over to get into the cabin. For five minutes I studied ship reports from various positions on the Atlantic, and squinted critically at conditions over England and Newfoundland. And right away I knew that we were in a big hurry. The icing condition we had come through was getting worse fast, and the weather was going to be really tough.

At the plane, just then, I noticed a clot of men; and I could see Wilbur standing half inside and half outside the cabin door. As I came up, I heard an angry feminine voice from inside.

"All right, you put me out! Go on—put me out!"

Wilbur's voice came back to me over his shoulder. He sounded upset. "Really, darling," he said plaintively, "you know your father does not approve of this. If I permitted it, he would never forgive me."

"If you don't permit it," Madeline blazed, "I'll never forgive you!"

"Then we won't go," Wilbur snapped.

I said: "Oh, yes, we'll go. If we don't get back to New York within twenty hours, we won't get back for a week."

Wilbur turned his head and looked at me. His face was grim, his eyes small and uglily bright. He grated: "This is a family argument, and you keep out of it. I won't take her—I won't go."

I was already pretty tired of his dictatorial importance. But that wasn't the reason I was determined to leave. My deal was with J. S.—to fly to Paris and back in seventy-two hours, and I felt that my whole financial future was at stake. So I said, "Okay, pal, suppose you stay here, or do whatever you like—but I'm taking off."

He backed out of the cabin, giving me a very dirty look. "I know one way to settle that. I'm going to telephone J. S. Van Osdoll!"

"I won't talk to him!" Madeline yelled.

Feeling pretty agitated, I climbed into the cockpit. Madeline was sitting in the seat in front of the gas-tank, hugging her knees, and she looked mad clear through. She said angrily, "He's made up his mind he's going to wear the pants in this family, that's what's the matter with him."

"Or maybe he loves you," I said, turning on gas valves and checking everything. Then I turned my head and grinned at her. "If I were in his place, I wouldn't want you to go, either."

She made a face at me. "You would too," she said.

There was no answer for that, because she was right. I sat there, thinking what a nice mess it would be if J. S. called the whole thing off, after Wilbur talked to him. I didn't expect that, but I was afraid of it; I knew enough about J. S. to know how impatient he was. It occurred to me to take off then and there, without Wilbur, but I couldn't very well do that, at least until he had completed his call—yet I was afraid to let him complete it. So I fiddled with my charts and tried to keep calm, feeling exasperated and worried, and thinking again and again about all that money.

IN a few minutes Wilbur came back, looking as sore as a plucked turkey buzzard. He said, "Well, move over," to Madeline, and climbed in beside her.

"What did J. S. say?" Madeline asked.

Wilbur made a sound in his throat. "Nothing!" he snapped.

I grinned over my shoulder at Madeline. "I never knew J. S. to take five minutes to say nothing, before," I said. And then, to Wilbur, I added: "Didn't he say anything, when you tried to call off the flight?"

"I told you he didn't say anything," Wilbur growled. "Go on and take off."

"Then you did ask him to call the flight off?" Madeline asked. She sounded slightly amazed.

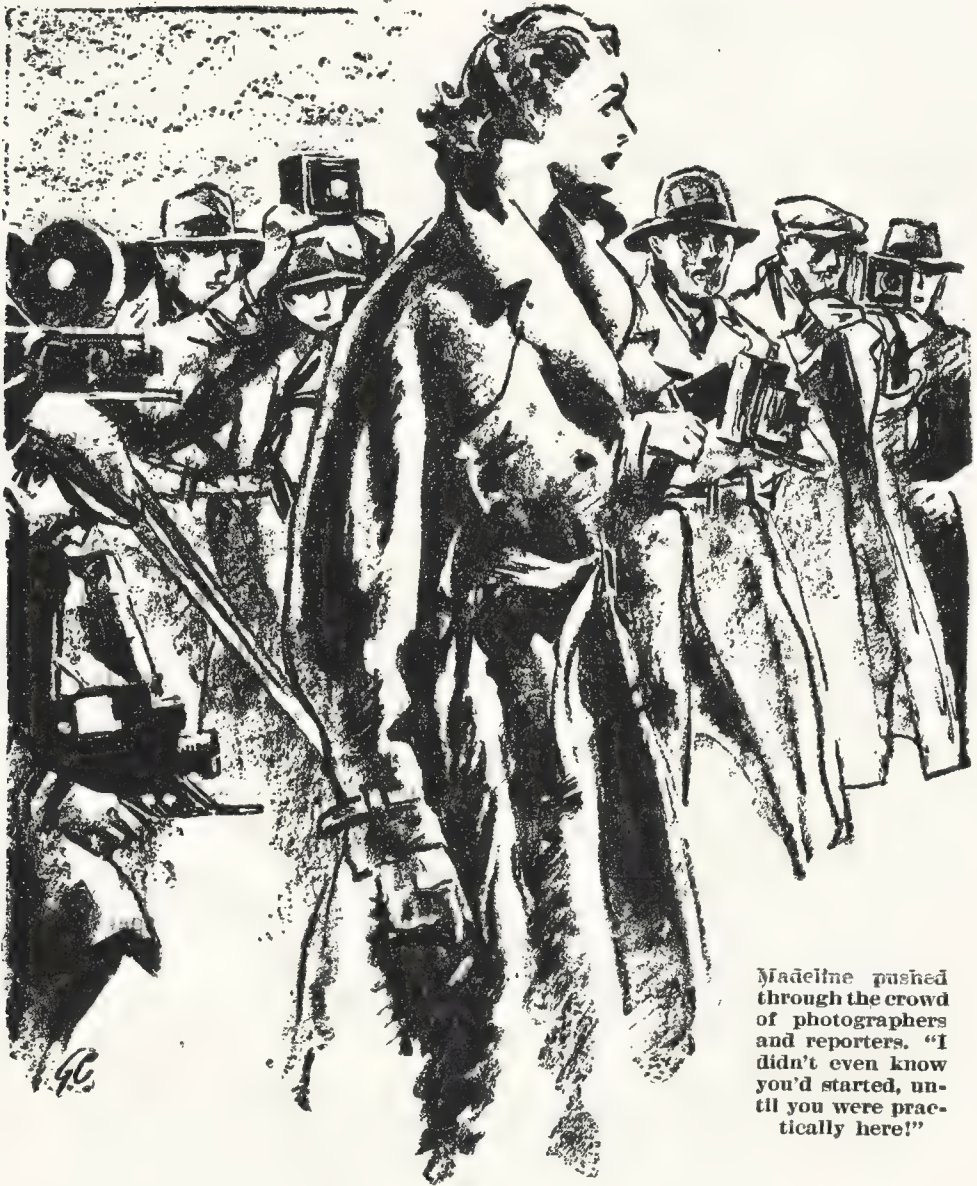
But I did not hear Wilbur's answer, because I started the engine just then, and the exhaust muffled my ears like a woolen blanket as I taxied out to take off.

We got off very badly, after an extremely long run, and fought for altitude and turned toward the coast. At ten thousand feet I leveled off. The first part of the flight did not look so bad, but still I was worried about the danger of ice. Then, because I had Madeline with me, I decided to abandon the shorter great-circle route, and head straight for New York, navigating entirely by radio compass. That would keep us in warmer latitudes, and if we did not find too much head-wind, we would get through.

FOR the first seven hours we had no trouble of any kind, and the weather was not very bad. We would be above patches of clouds for a while, then in them, then under them. Once in a while we passed a steamer; it would come up on the horizon ahead, smoke spewing low over the heavier breast of the sea, and slip under the nose and be gone. We saw fifteen or twenty of them. I tuned my radio compass on several, but they were all working in code.

All the time Wilbur and Madeline sat there behind me, taking in the sights. Madeline, to pass the slow drag of the hours, tried guessing the names of the boats we saw, but of course we were much too high to see any names. Once in a while, above the roar of the engine, I could hear Wilbur shouting something to her, explanations to questions she asked. But for the most part they were both silent; there is nothing more boring than sitting high in an airplane, with no sensation of speed and no perspective of height, and nothing to do but wait for the miles to slide past.

Then, seven hours out, we hit the "cold front" and began to take on ice. It didn't bother Madeline in the least; she was all eyes, watching the rough incrustations piling up on the leading edges of the wings. But it bothered Wilbur. He



Madeline pushed through the crowd of photographers and reporters. "I didn't even know you'd started, until you were practically here!"

stood up behind me and asked our position, asked if I was positive we would get through.

"Sure, we'll get through," I said, although I wasn't as sure as I sounded.

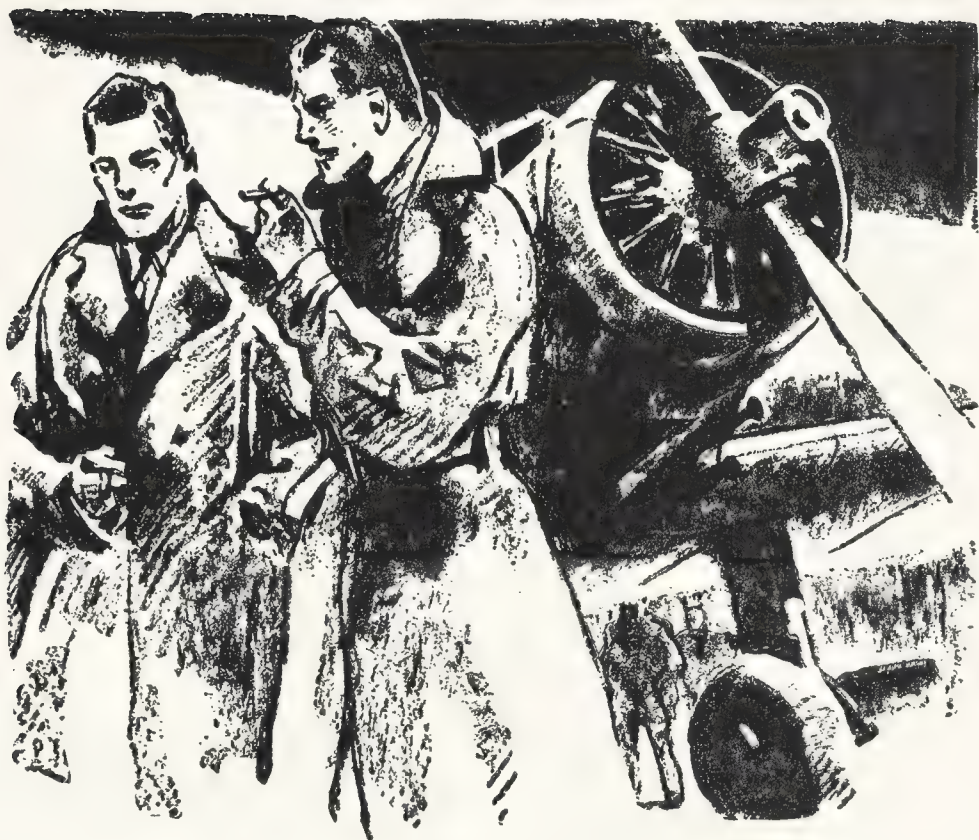
"Remember, you've got Madeline here," Wilbur reminded me.

I watched his face for a moment, and said: "Yeah—and you, too."

AT fourteen thousand feet we got on top of the overcasts; although we couldn't see the ocean after that, we were out of the ice. So I settled down again, and kept tuning my radio compass, trying to navigate that way, but sticking to the magnetic-compass course all the time.

There were a lot of boats, and we passed directly over two of them. Most of the time, I kept the receiver tuned on a station in New York, and finally picked up a broadcast. New York had eight hundred feet, and was getting worse slowly. I figured we were riding on top of the worst weather area we would encounter, and in four or five hours I could start letting down. I wanted to get under the ceiling before we reached shore.

Just as I was figuring that out, I felt a sudden, peculiar vibration somewhere in the nose. You do not realize how tense you are, flying, until something like that happens. I would have said I was calm, but now my heart leaped. A



moment later, when I heard a distinct explosion, like a small pistol-shot, my heart started to pound, and I could feel sweat bursting out under my hat band.

For that explosion hadn't been the exhaust—it had been something breaking, up front. The vibration continued, getting worse all the time. The whole plane started to shudder—so badly that the wings began fluttering; and when vibration gets that bad, you know it is serious. This was serious, all right. The wing-tips were flexing fully a foot on each oscillation, and the oscillations were rapid.

I DON'T know whether Madeline had been asleep or not; I yelled first, and throttled back quickly, and then looked around. Wilbur was half standing, his eyes almost popping out of his face, glancing first at me and then at the engine. But Madeline was leaning back comfortably, not conscious, yet, that anything had gone wrong.

"Sit down!" I shouted at Wilbur. "Get your belts on!"

"What happened?" Wilbur screamed.

"I don't know—something broke; we're in trouble!"

Almost afraid to breathe, I eased back all the way on the throttle, watching the engine cowl, which was jumping up and down as if it were going to shake loose. The scream of the wind sluffed to a moan, not all at once, but gradually, while the air speed dropped to a hundred. We were already mushing, going down fast, with the dazzling white of the overcast just underneath us. And still that racking vibration kept getting greater, instead of diminishing.

Madeline had her belt on now, and was watching me with a curious calm.

"Motor-mount busted, or something!" I yelled.

"What does that mean?" she asked.

Wilbur, his face a dead white, told her. He said: "It means we're all going to get wet."

"Drag out the life-raft," I ordered, and turned back to my flying.

The vibration got steadily worse as the engine slowed down, until now a kind of numbing fright hit me when I realized that no airplane could survive this kind of thing long without structural failure. We were at thirteen thousand feet. The thought of wing failure was tying knots in my stomach as we sank lower and

lower and went into the clouds. I got a final glimpse of the sun, and then the gray icy mist swallowed us. . . .

It was right after we had fallen into the clouds that I smelled raw gasoline.

I don't think I had been really frightened, until then. But the danger of fire made me give up all hope of avoiding falling into the Atlantic; I grabbed the gas valve and shut off the flow from the engine. The exhaust sputtered three or four times and was silent—a kind of aching silence that was without variation except for the thin sighing of the wind over the wings, a silence that was eerie with tension prolonged.

But even with the gas off, the propeller still continued to "windmill" at nine hundred revs. Nothing could stop it. I stalled, until we fell off and I had to nose down sharply to keep from going into a spin; I flattened the prop pitch and tried it again, but the propeller kept turning.

All the time, I kept trying to figure out what had happened. The tip of the prop might have come off, or a weld in the engine-mount might have crystallized—any one of three or four things, but I could not determine which one, nor do anything whatever about it, from my seat in the cockpit. One thing was sure, however: my flying from Paris to New York was finished right here—and probably we were all finished, with it.

For we were in the midst of the bad-weather area, and under us was a low ceiling that reached away for a hundred, two hundred or even three hundred miles. The ceiling might be zero here. And even if it happened to be much more than that, there was a steady rain that would cut visibility down to practically nothing. No boat would pick us up, three specks in a tiny speck of a life-raft. It would not pick us up because it would never find us.

WE went down—down—down; and it was like treading a measured last mile to the gallows. The wings began picking up ice, but it didn't stick long now, for the vibration shook it off as fast as it formed. And somehow, the wings stayed on, which seemed nothing short of a miracle, and spoke well for all-metal construction.

As I walked my rudder to keep the ship level, all the time I was tuning my radio compass. We were down to ten thousand feet now, and we might glide twenty miles. The only hope was to find

a boat by radio, and glide to its side—and that was a slim hope at best.

Then, faintly, a signal came into my earphones. Quickly I swung the ship in a turn to the left, listening to that spatter of code. It surged louder. I turned back to the right, and the signal diminished. It was a boat; there was no doubt about that—the only trouble was that I could not tell how far we were from it. It might be fifty miles, from the way the signals came in. And we could glide only twenty.

Yet that seemed our only chance, now; so I held my heading and flew, straining my ears. We were down to six thousand feet. Wilbur was standing up behind me, staring out into the fog that pressed so tightly against the windows. I couldn't turn my head to see Madeline. The rate-of-climb was sitting at a thousand feet a minute descent.

IT is incredible how fast you lose altitude, when an engine has quit. Before I knew it, we were down to three thousand feet, and my ears were beginning to ache from the too-rapid change. The signal was getting louder, but slowly—so slowly that I knew we were not nearly in range of that boat.

It came as a shock to me to discover that we were down to a thousand feet; I wasn't prepared for it yet. The clouds pressed in close around us, cold and wet and smothering, for there were no breaks. The ice had piled on our wings thickly, close to the fuselage where the vibration wasn't enough to dislodge it; and the ice cut our range.

"The instant we hit," I yelled at Wilbur and Madeline, "you go through the hatch with that raft. Get up on the fuselage and get the thing inflated. Understand?"

Madeline nodded, biting her lips. Wilbur didn't say anything.

The signal was getting louder too slowly. And then, abruptly, as I strained my ears to gauge its increase, it stopped altogether; the operator had quit sending.

So there we were, and I knew that nothing could keep us from smacking that rough, open sea—and I knew that nothing could save us after we were once down in it. We had no way to broadcast what was happening.

At five hundred feet, there were still no breaks in the clouds; the Atlantic was buried under those black, ominous layers of mist. I wondered if there was a dense fog on the surface, so that I

would not be able to see the water before we went into it. It was important that I see, so that I could pancake on under control. If we failed to strike just right, we would go under like a rock in a pond. Even as it was, this plane would not float more than ten minutes. In a final gesture of sheer desperation, I tuned up the volume of the radio compass. But the air was silent and utterly empty.

Then, suddenly, we popped out of the overcast. The tumbling gray sea lay four hundred feet underneath. I snatched open a window, scanning the horizon quickly, hoping to catch sight of the boat we had aimed for. The Atlantic was lifeless, stretching away, tier on tier of gray rollers. And in a moment we had to go down into that smother. Getting ready for that, I began a quick turn into the wind.

And when I turned, I saw a sight so beautiful that it robbed me of speech. An immense ocean liner was plowing along there, directly under us as we had emerged from the clouds. That radio compass had guided us to it, and I would have known we were over it when we passed, if the operator had not quit transmitting when he did.

I nearly spun out of that turn, I made it so quickly. Leveling off alongside the boat, I hauled the nose up. With a tremendous splash, we went down into a trough. We buried ourselves for a moment, and came up and rode on the waves. The cold sea spurted in through the seams of the fuselage as we clambered out through the hatch, and clung there, waving and yelling almost hysterically as the boat came about.

TO have a dry deck under our feet, and to eat dinner at the captain's table that night, was pretty grand. My borrowed clothes even fit me. I didn't mind the way Wilbur took charge of all the publicity.

I don't know who got the idea of broadcasting, but the first thing I knew, right after dinner, the captain introduced me to two men who were connected with a big broadcasting company in New York, and they explained that they had made a hook-up by radio with their studio, and that they wanted Wilbur and Madeline and me to say a few words over the air. So I found Madeline, and we went along. Wilbur was already there.

We came in just as Wilbur was starting his talk; he was standing with his

back to the doorway, and he was speaking into a telephone, and he was doing a good job. He was saying: "Being the pilot of a trans-oceanic flight has taught me a great many things—and one of them is that when you land in the ocean, it is a very good thing to have a boat within range that you can navigate to." He paused, and chuckled, then went on.

MADELINE and I stood and took it all in. Two red spots were appearing on her cheeks. She listened to Wilbur, and her eyes got brighter and brighter. Then, very suddenly, she grabbed my arm and pulled me outside, up to the boat-deck. The boat was plowing soundlessly through the dark sea.

Madeline faced me and said:

"Did you hear him? Did you *hear* him? 'Being the pilot of a trans-oceanic flight'! Why—"

"Sure," I grinned. "I don't mind—I'm used to it. Didn't J. S. send me out to get him publicity?"

"I know," Madeline said. And then she went on, after a moment:

"But—well, really, Johnny, this last is too much." She looked at me, a very straight look, and demanded: "Tell me the truth—did he ever do any of the flying, when you were along?"

"No," I admitted.

She stamped her foot angrily. "You big, stupid fool! Why did you let him take all the credit?"

I said, "I thought that's what J. S. and you wanted, kitten," remembering suddenly that what I had wanted had been fifty grand—which I was not going to get, now.

Madeline sniffed.

"You make me sick, Johnny McGuff! And that Wilbur, with all his commands and fine lies."

"Wilbur too?" I said.

"Yes, Wilbur too!"

Well, we did three turns around the deck, while Wilbur told the world what it felt like to fall into the Atlantic Ocean. In those three turns, we got some things settled that we hadn't been able to settle in all the years past.

And I guess money isn't everything, after all. Working at something you want to do, like running the aviation department for the Van Osdol Oil Company, keeps a guy happy. And having a wife like Madeline certainly helps.

P.S. I wear the pants—most of the time, anyway.

GUNPOWDER

By
GORDON
KEYNE



The Story Thus Far:

"GUNPOWDER gold?" exclaimed the American secret agent Luther Grimm. "I'd steal and beg and rob and murder for it! For myself? No! For what flames in a man's heart and soul, for what burns in his brain, for what drives him mad! For his father, facing the enemy with empty guns! For his brothers, condemned to the hell of a prison-ship and imprisonment because the army had no powder or food! For his mother and sister, alone in a country overrun by hired mercenaries. That's the true reason I'd break into hell to get that amount of money. And I cover it up with fine words—for Dr. Franklin, for the Congress, for Washington! For my own people—aye!"

For his own people, indeed, Grimm had already risked life and suffered wounds both on American battlefields and here in Europe. Now he was hot on the trail of the vast sum the beleaguered colonies so sorely needed—and it was a woman's money! For through his friend the French agent St. Denis he had learned that the exiled young Russian Duchess Marie of Courland had been left two

hundred million francs by her father. The money was held by two Berlin bankers awaiting her arrival to claim it in person. And both she and her inheritance were of course threatened by ruthless birds of prey: by her own sister Flora, married to the foppish but able German Count Otto von Osbrock; by Frederick the Great of Prussia, eager for money to finance new wars; by England, represented by their unscrupulous agent Mortlake; and by France.

It was with France that Marie of Courland made terms when she contrived to escape from the convent in which she had been imprisoned. In exchange for half her fortune, France had undertaken to protect her and the other half, and had agreed to share the money with the American colonies. Remained, however, to get the money out of Germany.

So Luther Grimm and St. Denis had crossed the border, had met the lovely young Duchess and were proceeding toward Berlin when Mortlake and Count Otto learned of their journey. St. Denis had been captured and tortured—and rescued by Grimm. The American had twice escaped attack. The Duchess had been obliged to continue the journey in disguise, accompanied by her aged servant Jacques. But now Grimm and St. Denis had been decoyed aboard a boat to cross the Rhine, had been set upon by Count Otto and his men, and St. Denis had been killed through trickery while engaged in a duel with the wily Count. Grimm, weaponless and helpless, let himself out the stern window into the river in an attempt to swim ashore.

St. Denis dead—tricked into death—the thought burned within him, stirring him to frantic efforts as he swam desperately. A boat had put out from the barge; from it came a chorus of excited shouts as the men in it pressed in hot pursuit of him. (*The story continues in detail:*)

GOLD

The desperate adventure of an American secret agent sent to help Benjamin Franklin raise money in Europe during the Revolution. . . . By the gifted author of "Life's a Fight, Kit!" and other well-remembered stories.

Illustrated by
Peter Kuhlhoff



GRIMM dragged himself ashore gasping, agonized, ignorant of what lay ahead. In those frenzied efforts to claw back up to the stern window of the boat, he had hurt himself—had twisted his muscles, reviving the pain of those long searing bayonet-wounds that had ended his soldiering back in America. He was in agony of body and mind alike.

The passing of this frightful night remained to him afterward as the memory of blind and shivering horror. Everywhere were bobbing lanterns as men searched for him. He struggled desperately to find his way somewhere, and could not. By a miracle, he evaded all pursuit, crawling into coverts, getting a snatch of sleep here and another there. Sometime after midnight, dragging himself through a vineyard, he discerned the dark mass of a house ahead. Dogs rushed out at him. He was beating them off frantically when a woman appeared with a lantern, had a glimpse of him, and uttered a piercing shriek.

"The devil is in the vineyard, Hans! The devil is in the vineyard!" rang out her wild cries.

Grimm fled, rid himself of the dogs, and stumbled on, his whole body aching.

Dawn was touching the east with gray when he came at last to a hill road and followed it blindly. Here, as it proved, luck was with him. Day was breaking, the golden spears of sunrise were lifting from the horizon, when he finally realized that he had come into a broad highroad. This was the highway that led to Ems and on to distant Berlin.

Sobbing relief shook his exhausted frame, and he cursed the ague of the Jersey marshes that shook him intolerably. That immersion, that burst of desperate effort, had wakened all the old ills. He was a walking scarecrow, his shrunken garments still soggy, the weight of gold still about his waist as he staggered on.

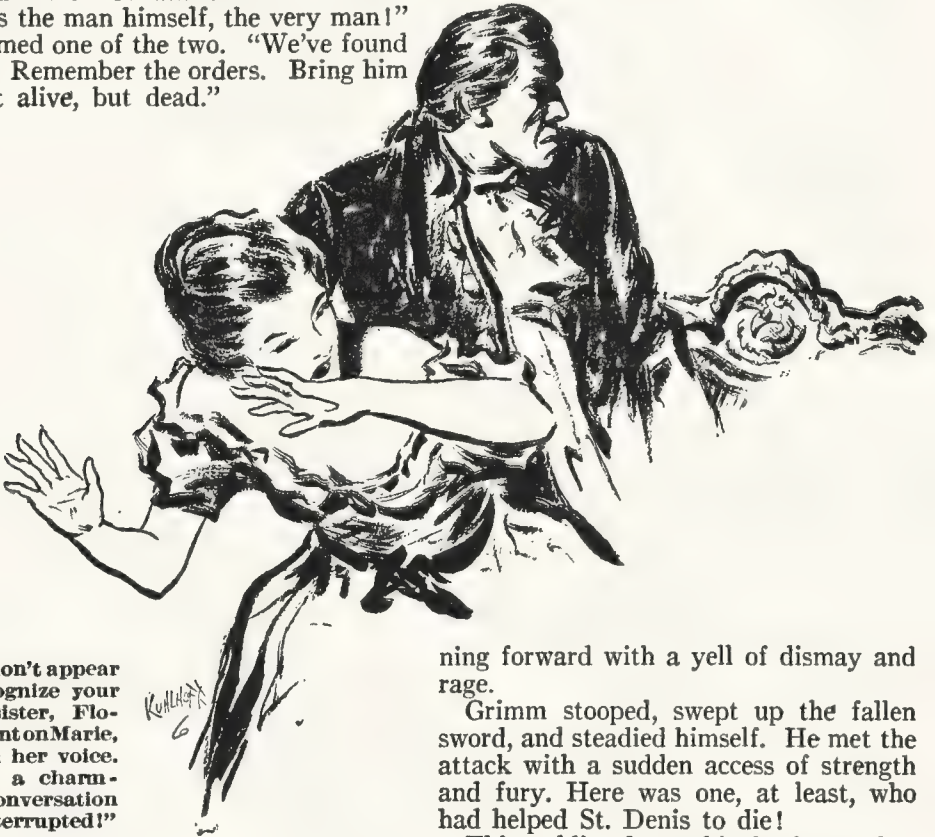
He could do no more. He sank down on a rock beside the road. Removing some of his sodden garments, he waited for the genial sunrise to dry and warm him. Chills shook him repeatedly, and there was a dry burning in his head.

The sound of hoof-beats roused him to sunlight; his dull eyes lifted, focused—and he knew he was lost. His head fell.

Two horsemen were swinging along the road, only to draw rein and stare hard at him. No help here. These were soldiers; and in one of them he recognized the man he had glimpsed on the barge, the man who had spoken to Count Otto.

Hurriedly they dismounted and rushed toward him. Grimm could not move.

"It's the man himself, the very man!" exclaimed one of the two. "We've found him! Remember the orders. Bring him in not alive, but dead."



"You don't appear to recognize your dear sister, Flora," went on Marie, acid in her voice. "What a charming conversation I've interrupted!"

"Make sure of him first," grunted the second. Leaning over, he caught Grimm by the shoulder and shook him savagely. "Wake up, fellow! Who are you and where from? Answer!"

Luther Grimm's eyes swept them, swept on to the horses with their holstered pistols. A spark came afire in his brain and he came lurching and staggering to his feet, putting a hand to his pocket. He drew out a fistful of gold.

"Here, take it," he mumbled, and flung the coins into the dust.

With a sharp cry one of the two men darted on the glittering coins. Grimm broke from the other, and flung himself forward in one last effort of brain and muscles, one convulsive burst of energy. The man whipped out sword and came leaping after him.

Already Grimm was at the horses, however, snatching the pistol from the

nearest holster. He swung around. If the priming was wet, if it missed fire—

The heavy pistol roared, spurted smoke, and the soldier plunged forward on his face; his sword rattled at Grimm's feet. The second man was already run-

ning forward with a yell of dismay and rage.

Grimm stooped, swept up the fallen sword, and steadied himself. He met the attack with a sudden access of strength and fury. Here was one, at least, who had helped St. Denis to die!

This soldier knew his business; but Luther Grimm, despite his fevered brain, knew it better. At the third pass he ran the man through, and stepped back.

"No foul blow there," he panted harshly. "And no trick, either!"

The soldier crumpled to the ground, cursing. Grimm dragged the two bodies off the road. A sword at his hip, a horse to ride. . . . Again he was on his way.

ON the outskirts of Ems, Grimm turned the horse loose and went afoot into the little town. He had scarcely put down a flagon of wine at the post tavern, when the diligence from Coblenz came roaring in with a blare of post-horns. Grimm had just time to secure a place and scramble aboard.

Despite the fearful jolting, he soon fell into a doze that lasted for hours, though with frequent breaks. The thought of Mortlake filled his fluttering mind.

At noon he came awake with fever-fancies dancing through his head, with alternate burnings and chills seizing him, with visions of St. Denis and Mortlake still pursuing his wild thoughts. Only by a frightful effort could he keep himself from talking aloud, from muttering wild words.

It was toward sunset when the diligence rattled into Altendorf, with Coblenz now far away and forgotten over the horizon.

Here there was a wait of fifteen minutes, to change horses and give the passengers a chance at food and drink. Grimm staggered into the tavern room and called for wine. He gulped it from the bottle.

The town was small, but the place was full of people, the inn yard held several coaches and carriages. To Grimm, everything was a blur. He had lost coherence.

Then, suddenly, one thing came clear: the face of a man in the street, passing the tavern. A face with one eye gone, the other alive and flaming. He could see the man there in the street, a massive figure swinging along. Mortlake! One wild yell burst from Grimm.

Like a man drunk,—as in fact he was,—Luther Grimm hurled himself out of the tavern, tugging at his sword. He swiftly overtook that heavy figure. The man turned a broad, honest face to him in startled amazement and fear. To Grimm's fevered vision it was the face of Mortlake, and he came in with his blade lunging.

The hapless man evaded the wild attack and shouted frantically for help. Townsfolk came running. Burghers and apprentices came leaping to quell the shouting madman.

A furious commotion arose, as Grimm found himself beset and began to fight everyone in sight. The whip of a carter curled about Grimm's sword, wrenching it from his grasp. The tumult grew.

A wooden *sabot* was hurled. It caught Grimm over the eyes and knocked him backward on the stones. Men piled on him. Bare-handed, he won free of them, fighting desperately. Some one tripped him, and he was down again.

Even so, he still fought with spasmodic fury. The crowd jammed the street and choked the tavern entrance. Blows were showered on the writhing, struggling figure, blood was running down his cheek. Suddenly he collapsed in utter exhaustion and fell forward on his face. He lay quiet, except for his rasping breath.



The burgomaster came shoving through the yelling throng. Place was made for him. He surveyed Luther Grimm and stroked his beard, and shook his head.

"A lunatic, a madman," he said pityingly. "Bring chains. Rivet them on his arms and legs, and put him into the jail—"

"Your pardon, Burgomaster," intervened a soft voice. "I know the man. Let me beseech you to place him in my charge. He's not mad; rather, he's ill. He evidently has fever. Turn him over to me, and I'll be responsible for him."

CHAPTER VII

LUTHER GRIMM vaguely remembered that attack of frenzy, as in the wasting memory of dream; it seemed like a part of that fever-ridden nightmare of

wandering, with the dying words of St. Denis following him like a pursuing ghost. Then came faint recollections—the face of Marie bending over him and her voice in his ears, the jolting of a cushioned carriage, a cooling drink.

The slight echoes lingered in his brain when he came definitely awake to warm sunlight and voices, coherent impressions. He felt perfectly clear in his mind, but devilish hungry and thirsty. He turned his head and looked around curiously. He was lying in bed, beside wide open windows, in an empty room—a room in some tavern, by its looks.

IT was early morning. Close by, outside his windows, level sunbeams fell upon two grooms washing a carriage; a third man was sauntering toward the two and engaging them in conversation. Grimm found himself staring hard at this third man, whose wrinkled features snatched at his memory. Bits of talk drifted to him from the three.

"Whose carriage?" One of the grooms laughed. "It belongs to the lady who came in yesterday afternoon. How should I know her name?"

The third man shrugged and turned. He came past the windows. On abrupt and sharp impulse, Grimm lifted himself to one elbow.

"Jacques!" his voice rang out. "Is it really you?"

The dried-up old servitor of Courland—yes, no other! He started, glanced around and caught sight of Grimm's face. He stared with fallen jaw and a look of utter stupefaction; then he swung around and fairly ran from Grimm's vision.

With an oath of puzzled astonishment, Luther Grimm tried to get to the window. Grimacing, he fell back on the pillows. He was stiff and sore; plaster hid a cut on his forehead; his entire body ached with bruises, cuts, contusions. Dimly he recalled that fracas in the street of Altendorf. Where was he now? He had encountered Marie, of course, or she must have found him and taken care of him. Then why that look of amazement on the face of her servant? It was all most bewildering.

The door of the room opened. He looked around to see a serving-maid of the inn, holding a tray. She came forward, smiling cheerfully at him.

"How did I get here?" Grimm demanded abruptly.

"In a carriage, of course!" She laughed as she set down the tray.



A furious commotion arose.

"But where am I—what town is this?"

"You're in bed," she replied gayly. "This is Dortstadt, sir, the finest town in all Saxony. I'll tell Madame that you're awake."

She went out hastily. Saxony! Then, thought Grimm, he was already far on the way to Berlin—but how the devil had he got here? Madame? That would be Marie, no doubt. Then what had become of Mortlake?

Grimm shoved perplexity aside and attacked the food ravenously. In the midst, the memory of St. Denis smote him like an actual blow. . . . Dead, and tricked into death!

The thought was like the impact of a spur, goading him out of bed. His clothes, or rather the garments he had worn, lay on a chair at one side. He staggered to them, struggled painfully into them; the



as Grimm found himself beset, and began to fight everyone in sight.

effort left him weak and sick with the hurt of his bruised body, for the fever had robbed him of strength.

Presently he was able to finish his breakfast, and the aching muscles gradually relaxed until he could move more naturally. His papers and money were gone. He had no weapon.

There was a step, a hand at the door; it swung open. Grimm leaped to his feet with a glad word.

"Marie! Then it was you after all—"

"It was I, yes; but not Marie."

Smiling, she came to him as he stood stunned—partly by realization of the truth, partly by the sheer glorious beauty of her. At this early morning hour her loveliness was a sheer miracle.

She was gowned in rich blue velvet sewn with seed-pearls. Her pale golden hair was like an aureole about her

features. So warm and aglow with friendliness was her face, so merry and sparkling, that Grimm was dumfounded. He could not believe that this was the woman who, at their last remembered meeting, had come at him with a poniard.

She held out her hand to him with a frank and winning air.

"A lucky thing for you that I happened to pass and recognize you, night before last, or you'd be in a lunatic's cell this minute! Come—will you forgive me for all that happened when we last met? It's easy to make mistakes, you know; especially when one has been the victim of outrageous lies. But now I've learned the truth about that man."

Luther Grimm took her hand and bowed over it. He met her steady gaze, his own eyes edged with surmise.

"What man?"

She shivered slightly, and her reply all but stupefied him.

"My husband—Otto. And all the while I thought that you had entrapped my poor sister, that you were forcing her to do as you desired, that you—oh, it was all so horrible! I tried to beguile you; I would gladly have killed you, for her sake; but now I know the truth. And I'm ashamed."

"Then it's to you I owe my life and safety?" Grimm asked slowly.

"And health, thanks to my knowledge of herbs and drugs." Under the open admiration of his regard, she smiled again. "Oh, you owe me nothing, really! I'm the one who am in debt, my friend."

Grimm smiled dryly. "True, perhaps. My money's gone—"

"All safe." Laughing, she turned and pointed at a little leather bag in one corner. "I put your papers and money in that bag, for convenience. So much gold would be a sore temptation to servants. Come along, let's see if it's safe."

She tugged at his hand and led him over to the corner. He lifted the bag to the table and opened it. Loose gold, inside, and the papers of Jan Stern.

"Are you satisfied?" she demanded, looking into his face. Grimm shook his head slightly and frowned.

"No. What do you intend? What's the reason of this friendship?"

A WARMTH of sympathy flooded her face. She laid a hand on his arm, and met his gaze with so earnest, so appealing an expression that for a moment he was shaken.

"You've every right to suspect me; but now I've been able to prove my good will toward you," she said quietly. "Forget all the lies that have been told about me, as I've forgotten those told me about you. I can give you all you desire, and more. I can help you and help Marie, now that I know all the truth. I can open all doors to you, show you secrets, wealth, other things at Otto's castle and at the Last Virgin, that will astonish you. I can help you to whatever you want in this world—"

He listened with only idle attention to her words. He was reflecting swiftly on what lay behind them. At the moment he was no beauty, and he knew it. She certainly was not attracted by any appeal in his looks. By what, then? Hard to say, just now.

"Where's Count Otto?" he asked abruptly.

"I don't know. I haven't seen him since we reached Coblenz."

"But I have," said Grimm.

His eyes were not pleasant. She shrank from his gaze, dropped her hand from his arm, and stood with nostrils quivering, breath coming fast. She could not mistake what lay behind those coldly piercing eyes, those coldly significant words.

"SUPPOSE we abandon pretense, madam," went on Grimm calmly. "For after all, I do owe you much; and whatever your motives, I'm keenly grateful. I'm not your dupe; neither am I your enemy. Will you believe this? You're too beautiful, too intelligent, too wise," he added, his deep blue eyes warming, "to make an enemy of a man who bears you only gratitude."

She bit her lip. The storm passed out of her face.

"But you're a magician!" she murmured. "Indeed, I could almost believe that you're an honest man!"

Luther Grimm smiled. "At times, perhaps; this is one of the times. Will you tell me why you saved my life?"

Under his gaze, her manner changed abruptly. Her voice chilled. A shrewdness, a hardness, glittered in her eyes. Here was a flash of the real woman, unscrupulous, scheming, clever.

"Yes!" she broke out impulsively. "Otto has made a mess of everything, and will listen to no advice. I distrust that man Mortlake; I fear him. Otto is endangering himself and his position, everything! What's more, he's afraid of you. I've never before known him to be afraid of anyone. You're more valuable than he is—"

Luther Grimm broke into a gust of laughter. A month previously, he might have welcomed such an intrigue as was now offered him; but no longer.

"I understand," he cut in with a chuckle. "As a business proposition I'm a better bet than your husband, eh? Madam, I agree with you entirely." He sobered suddenly and bent a quick look upon her. "I'll make you a proposal: Abandon the sinking ship of deceit and crime and intrigue. Throw over this husband of yours, since you pretend to be displeased with him. Just what you're driving at, I don't know or care, but I'll accept you at face value. Help your sister to get her inheritance. Throw your energy and ability on the side of right and justice. I'll lend you a hand with this—"

Her eyes blazed at him with incredulous scorn, disdain, contempt.

"Do you dare to mock me?" she burst out passionately.

"God forbid!" said Luther Grimm, intent and grave. "I give you the advice of an honest man."

A low, musical laugh rang upon the room.

"As if she could comprehend such advice, or such a man!" said a new voice.

Grimm swung around. Standing in the doorway was a cloaked figure. In a flash, he recalled and understood the astonishment of old Jacques, the latter's questions about the carriage that was being washed—Flora's carriage—and the departure of Jacques at a run.

"You don't appear to recognize your dear sister, Flora," went on Marie with acid in her voice. "What a charming conversation I've interrupted! But I'll relieve you of Herr Grimm now. I think he travels on to Berlin with me. Comrade, the carriage is ready."

One piercing cry escaped the Countess. Only by the voice, obviously, did she recognize her sister. In this gallant attire, with wide plumed hat, with the cloak that enveloped her, Marie was past any casual recognition, even as a woman.

"Why—why, you vixen!" gasped out Flora. "You—you damned little trull—"

She took one step toward Marie, with a burst of invective that was terrific; it spared neither oaths nor names. Every vestige of the woman's loveliness took flight before the outbreak of fury that possessed her. In the midst, she hesitated and swayed, uttered a choking gasp, and sank to the floor. This sudden access of hatred, of amazement, of rage and chagrin, had flung her into a dead faint.

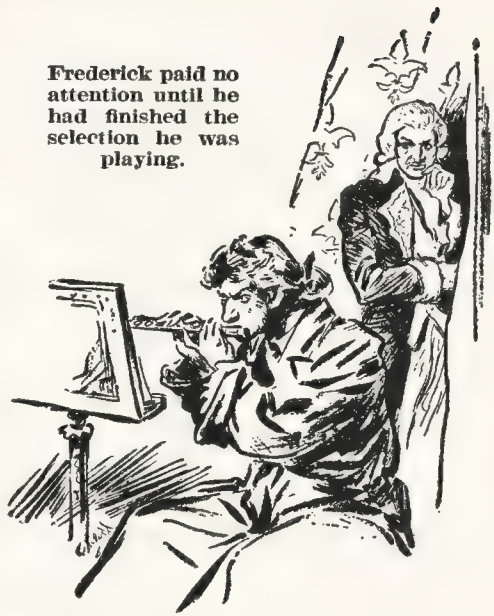
"Leave her alone," said Marie calmly. "It will pass. She's subject to such spells of fainting whenever she flies into a fury of emotion. Perhaps it's better so; we can safely leave her. She'll come around in a few moments."

IN almost frantic relief, Grimm caught up the little handbag. He pushed Marie out of the room, closed the door, and turned to her.

"Right! Get out of here in a hurry. Your carriage is here?"

"Yes. It's safe enough, and I've hired one. The Prussian border's just ahead. I tried traveling in the diligence, but it's been crowded, and twice we've been unable to get places. We've lost more time than we've gained."

Frederick paid no attention until he had finished the selection he was playing.



Her voice was cold, as they hurried together toward the courtyard. She went on even more coldly:

"So she's beautiful, intelligent, wise, is she? And affectionate too, no doubt. Are you sure you wouldn't prefer to go on with her and leave me?"

"Don't be a fool," snapped Luther Grimm angrily. "You had no business revealing yourself to her. You're in the utmost danger, whether here or in Berlin. Count Otto will know exactly whom to look for, now. You've made things doubly hard for us all by this—"

"You certainly don't think me intelligent, do you?" she broke in cuttingly. "Well, don't imagine to yourself that I'm afraid of her. I couldn't miss the chance to face her. I'm only sorry I didn't tell her exactly what I think of her."

"Yes, you would be. All you women are alike," Grimm replied in gusty wrath. Jacques was awaiting them on the box of the carriage. A groom was holding open the door as they approached. "Risking everything to vent your spite and temper; even telling her we're bound for Berlin—why, it's inconceivable! Such folly is past belief."

"You're tremendously grateful to her, aren't you? You owe her your life. You'll not forget it—why, you fool, do you know she's already sent one of her men to the police headquarters here?"

Marie paused on the carriage step, to fling the vehement words into his face. She went on even more heatedly:

"If you'd had sense enough to spar for time, pretend, play the game with her,

all might be well; but no! You had to be an honest man, because she's so beautiful! She wasn't taking any chances. She was prepared to make a dupe of you or else put you in safety—to play her own game, or that of Count Otto. In another half-hour you'd have been behind the bars for your fine honesty— Oh, get in, get in and stop your cursing! We've no time to lose here."

Grimm obeyed, with the sickening realization that her argument was sound.

The carriage went leaping away with a jerk. It flung him into the seat opposite Marie; the shock sent a shower of sparks through his head, a spasm of pain through his bruised body. White and faint, unable to speak or move, he could only sit there staring at her.

She divined something amiss. Sudden alarm sprang in her eyes; she leaned forward and touched his arm.

"What is it, what's wrong? Why, you're hurt! That cut on your head—how did you get here with her? Why do you owe her your life?" Cutting short her own flood of questions, she reached for a basket that was beneath the seat. "Here, don't speak; take this wine. Drink it."

Grimm took the bottle of wine she thrust at him. As the carriage rattled over the stones of the town streets, he gulped from the bottle. Suddenly he was amazed to find her laughing gayly.

"Aren't people funny when they lose their tempers, comrade? I'm like all damned women; you're a fool—oh, it was a good lively spat!" Her silvery laugh rang out afresh. "I like you when you're angry, Luther Grimm. And really, I must have been terribly unjust. But tell me what's happened since I saw you. Where's St. Denis?"

"Dead," Grimm rejoined, and saw the word bring pallor to her cheeks.

HE leaned back wearily, thankful for the cushions behind him. Almost grudgingly he found himself liking her attitude, her quick flare of temper, her equally quick laughter and apologies. He liked her balance. In the man's attire she wore, it was not so easy to think of her as a woman, as the girl he had known. But the softness of her hand, as it clutched and pressed his own, was most comforting testimony to the fact.

"Oh, my dear man! Really dead? It can't be possible; he was so alive!" Her voice was rich with grief and sympathy. "Tell me how it happened, all of it."

They were past the city gates now and out on the open highway, the horses speeding, the carriage lurching and swaying. Jacques drove as though the devil were after him, and the devil a woman.

So, as they drove on, she heard all the story.

The mere telling of it, facing the repetition of everything, took toll. Luther Grimm, his vitality exhausted, was at low ebb; he sank lower and lower in the grip of despondency and bitterness. He was really appalled by the appearance of Marie before her sister, and by what she had revealed to that woman; it threatened to dash all his plans to bits.

"THE whole thing looks useless," he concluded, with a despairing gesture. "The odds are too heavy. Count Otto controls the police; we're running smack into a trap. Even if you should reach Berlin, what then? Insuperable odds, the most frightful danger on all sides. I don't see any hope for success."

She was white to the lips as she looked at him and listened to his words.

"What do you mean? Is it my presence, the fact that Flora now knows how I'm disguised, that threatens everything?"

"No. The death of St. Denis has opened my eyes. It's a losing game all around," he said gloomily. "They've all the advantage; they hit too hard. It's hard to fight against murder."

He closed his eyes in listless lethargy. Nothing stirred him. Franklin? That old man was far away in Paris. Even farther, over a horizon of dream, lay the armies of Washington and the Continental Congress; a savage laugh stirred in his brain. What mattered his own people, all the driving urge that had spurred him formerly? Nothing. He was pursuing a trail of folly here in Germany. It was impossible, impossible!

He thought briefly of this girl beside him. A little stir awakened in him. After all, she was the one most immediately concerned. She was worth all effort, all the effort possible. A woman depending wholly upon him—well, the more fool she! His mental horizon clouded. A frightful despondency gripped him utterly. The immediate present, the facts facing him, loomed large and terrible.

What use fighting for his own people across the sea? None. It was all quite useless. His father, starving with Washington; his brothers, doomed; his mother and sister, facing an unknown, perilous existence—everything was hopeless. He

had cherished such hot and high thoughts of helping them, of doing that which would mean everything to them and other people like them—and it was all folly. He had entered into a game of relentless fury, with odds against which he could not cope. An empty-handed player cannot win.

Then he was aware of her voice, low and grave.

"You're right. You've lost heart, and I don't blame you. At Berlin we may meet disaster. Count Otto is perhaps there already. He travels night and day, goes like the wind, turns up where least expected, winds kings and ministers about his finger. And he has Mortlake to help him—one devil to help another."

"Mortlake!" Grimm's eyes opened.

"And you've no one, now St. Denis is gone."

A flicker came into those deep blue eyes of his. The harsh lines of his features seemed to tighten, become more hawklike.

"Hm! That's something must be paid for, yes. Hello! What's this?"

The carriage had swung out of the highway and halted. They had come to a crossroads, and now Jacques was climbing down to read the half-defaced signposts. Marie answered his question.

"My charming sister will follow the highway. Also, it'll be dangerous for us. I've ordered Jacques to circle around. It's farther, but safer."

"Yes, you're not safe any longer, now that she knows your disguise."

"I'm not safe against lies, treachery, cunning traps—nor against despair," she said quietly, watching him. "Nor against speed. Horses are scarce in Prussia. We can ask for fresh horses, pay for them—and perhaps not get them at all. Otto and my sister can command and take them, every post of twelve miles; running them full gallop between posts, killing them if necessary."

Grimm frowned. He opened the door and climbed out. Jacques was having trouble reading the signposts, and Grimm joined him. Yes, this cross-road would take them on the circuit they desired.

AS they stood in discussion, a flare of dust rose on the highway ahead. A courier, perhaps, coming from Berlin. The horseman drew into sight, bore down upon them full gallop. As he thundered past, Grimm heard a startled cry break from him, saw him pulling down his horse.

He halted the beast and came trotting back. His voice lifted.

"Monsieur! Monsieur Grimm!"

"Sainterre, of all people!" Grimm recognized him instantly. One of the secretaries of the Marquis d'Evrecourt, the ambassador to Berlin—a man whom he knew well, and who knew him and his work. Sainterre drew rein, leaned down to shake hands.

"Upon my word, M. Grimm, you're the last person I expected to see!" he exclaimed. "We've been expecting you at Berlin; letters from M. de Vergennes have been awaiting you. I could not help stopping to give you some information. I'm riding for Paris, you see. There wasn't a courier to be had, and Evrecourt sent me."

He glanced at Jacques. Grimm sent the old servitor back to the carriage and gave Sainterre a look.

"Well? What is it?"

"War's threatened," said the other rapidly. "Looks like a certainty. You know, the Elector of Bavaria died without issue. Austria is occupying Bavaria; the Emperor claims Bavaria as his inheritance. King Frederick refuses to recognize it and has sent the Emperor an ultimatum."

GRIMM whistled. "The devil! I understood that Frederick was considering an English alliance!"

"Yes. That devil Mortlake's in Berlin and at work; but now things have changed. It's a question whether Frederick will have more to gain from making war on us, or on Austria. Well, I must be off. I took the opportunity to inform you. I tell you, we need you in Berlin! *Adieu.*"

With a wave of his hand, Sainterre wheeled his horse, spurred the animal into speed, and was gone on a trail of dust.

Grimm hastened back to the carriage, told Jacques to go ahead on the side road, and got in. He swiftly told Marie what he had just learned.

"That's chance for you," he said. "The first sign of luck coming our way! If it had been a courier instead of Sainterre, who knows me well, he wouldn't have stopped. You see what this means?"

She frowned thoughtfully as the carriage jolted into speed.

"Better than you, perhaps," she rejoined. "It means that my money may be the deciding factor, especially with the grasping Frederick. It means that

Count Otto and Mortlake can still win everything, if my inheritance is flung into the balance. To catch me, they have only to watch those two bankers, whom I must reach. Oh, I was horribly foolish to let Flora know so much! Now she'll get word there ahead of us. If they do catch me, if it comes to the point of imprisonment and torture, I'll give up the money quickly enough, I fear."

"Frederick wouldn't use torture with a woman."

"Others would. Besides, there's more to it." She kindled quickly. "Don't you think Vienna is moving heaven and earth to throw Frederick against France, backing Count Otto and Mortlake with money and help of every kind?"

Luther Grimm nodded. Yes, she was right. If Frederick went into that English alliance and flung his armies against France, Austria could do as she liked; and it would mean disaster for France, disaster for the Continental armies across the ocean. Washington would get none of the supplies and men and money old Franklin was so desperately trying to secure for him.

"More odds against us," said Grimm. "By heaven, we're fighting all Europe!"

"And the weakness of despair."

He gave the girl a swift smile.

"Perhaps I have my dark moments, comrade, but cheer up. We're not licked yet. Three or four days more will see us in Berlin."

"Where Flora may be ahead of us."

GRIMM laughed. His spirits were reviving; this unexpected news had pulled him back into the game. And this woman, this girl opposite—why, she could bring the dead to life! He was fighting for her too; she had his promise. She was the one who faced the most bitter peril at Berlin.

"Never mind about that woman; you overrate her. We may never see her again."

Marie only smiled in response—a skeptic, pitying smile. Presently she spoke.

"Enjoy your illusions, comrade. It suited her to save you; she has crafty skill with herbs and drugs, and for once she put it to good use. Don't expect her to repeat. Well, forget her!"

"And remember St. Denis," said Grimm, a sudden glitter in his blue eyes.

A good comrade, this Marie! With man's attire, she had donned man's viewpoint, man's attitude, even man's oaths upon occasion. Her quiet argument,

Grimm realized, had helped to spur him out of his gloomy despair and prick him back to normal. As the day lengthened and waned, as the present swallowed up the past, he felt more like his old self.

Evening found them across the Prussian border, in a sedate little town. Here Luther Grimm went foraging, with broad gold-pieces to further his aims.

WITH morning, a new Grimm swaggered into the inn room to join Marie at breakfast. Her face changed; her eyes grew wide at sight of him: gold-laced coat, brocaded waistcoat, the finest of linens and lace, a rapier at his thigh, and a curled wig framing his lean shaven cheeks.

"Why, Flora was right! You're indeed a magician!" Marie exclaimed delightedly. "How on earth did you get those clothes to fit you, overnight?"

"Like this." Grimm jingled the coins in his pocket.

"Your gold? Or St. Denis' gold?"

An oath came to his lips, as the sting of the words hit him. He looked at her for a moment, then nodded quietly.

"You needn't use the spur any more. I'm myself."

"Thank heaven for that!" She extended her hand to him. "Comrades again?"

"Never anything else, I trust." Grimm's eyes kindled as he returned the clasp of her slim fingers. "And I like you as I first saw you, better than now. When do you get rid of this man's attire?"

"Is it safe to do so?"

He shrugged. "Flora will be ahead of us, or send word; now your disguise becomes a peril. They won't be looking for a duchess, however—so be one! That's the safest thing, just now."

"But I'm not a duchess, remember! My father's title has been given elsewhere. I'm just Marie of Courland. Very well, then; I'll need a little time and some clothes to return to myself. We should reach Wittenberg early tomorrow afternoon. Shall we stop there, instead of pressing ahead? If you don't mind delays, that is. I must rid my hair of this dye, get clothes, everything!"

"He who delays, runs risk of the devil, as the proverb says." Grimm laughed a little. "But perhaps it'll be best. After all, if King Frederick sees you in your real person, he can deny you nothing. So it's agreed. We'll pause at Wittenberg, then, and bring Marie of Courland back to life."

CHAPTER VIII

IN Berlin a man with one eye stood waiting in the courtyard of the King's residence, Sans Souci. Not the palace of this name, but the retired mansion which Frederick the Great, in the parsimony and eccentricity of his old age, preferred to any palace.



The man in the courtyard was powerfully built. His features expressed great strength, determination and placid poise. The one lost eye did not disfigure him; the lid was closed, that was all, and it merely gave his face a queerly unbalanced look. The one live eye was calm, inscrutable, but between the iris and the lower lid showed a rim of white eyeball; a sure sign of ruthless cruelty.

This man was well dressed. He displayed an air of perfect poise, neither walking nor moving about, but waiting calmly. The dinner hour was just over. No sentries were here; the place seemed empty and deserted, except for a lackey in frayed livery who stood by the entrance door. This lackey presently spoke to the one-eyed man.

"Monsieur, you're having a long wait," he said in French, the official language of the court. Frederick detested his natal tongue. "Don't you want to come into the shade? The sun's hot."

"I'm used to long waits," replied the man calmly. "The longer they are, the better they end."

This air of cool rebuff, this imperturbable *sang-froid*, disgusted the friendly lackey, who produced a snuffbox and sniffed copiously. Time dragged on.

A ringing click of hoofs, and a carriage appeared, rolling into the courtyard. The lackey sprang to attention. Count Otto von Osbrock alighted, saw the one-eyed man, and beckoned him. Count Otto was magnificently attired in pale blue and silver, and his handkerchief was of the finest lace.

"Ah, Mortlake!" he said affably. "I was delayed by news which will interest



you. No time to discuss it now. Are you sure of yourself, in case the King questions you closely?"

A smile, as though of derision, twitched at Mortlake's lips.

"Have you nothing more important to worry about?" he asked.

"Perhaps I have." Count Otto smiled sweetly and thumbed his little yellow mustache. He turned to the lackey. "His Majesty is here?"

"Yes, M. le Comte. But as you know, he always plays the flute after dinner and does not wish to be disturbed."

"I'll announce myself; open the door. Come, Mortlake!"

He entered the house with Mortlake.

Frederick, who played the flute uncommonly well, was alone in a music-room. He wore a distinctly untidy dressing-gown; his wig was awry; his wrinkled and choleric features were intent as he puffed; his large, brilliant eyes were gripped to the music on the rack.

Although he heard some one enter, he paid no attention until he had finished the selection he was playing. Then he swung around in hot anger.

"Haven't I given orders— Oh, it's you, Otto! And when did you return to Berlin?"

"Ten minutes ago, sire." The Count advanced. "I have information of such a character that I came straight to Your Majesty with it. I didn't have the heart to interrupt so lovely an aria, however. I've seldom heard music so well suited to the talent of the artist."

"Humph! A lot you know about music," sniffed the King, but obviously pleased none the less. "Yes, I wrote that aria myself. Well, well, what's your news? I ordered you to produce some proof of your outrageous charges against these French agents, in the Courland matter, and you prate about news!"

"My news, sire, is the proof in question."

Count Otto bowed, produced a snuff-box, and proffered it. The King stuffed a copious helping into each nostril.

"Spanish snuff; you're learning good taste, I see. That is, in some respects." He eyed the gorgeous blue and silver garments with caustic eye. "Come! This Marie of Courland disappeared. You and your wife undertook to find her; you made vague charges of a plot on the part of France and her agents. A hundred millions should have come into my pockets. You promised much; you've produced nothing. Meantime, the Austrians are occupying Bavaria."

"So I have heard," Otto admitted. "As to my poor sister-in-law, I have learned everything. It appears that two French agents were responsible for her disappearance. They clapped her into a convent cell in Cologne on pretense that she was insane. They attempted to force her into signing away her inheritance; finding this legally impossible, they persuaded her to come to Berlin and get it, in their company. They have offered her the protection of France, who in return will take half her patrimony—the half that should go to Your Majesty."

FREDERICK listened, a rising tide of color in his wrinkled cheeks.

"A damned outrage! France, you say, was responsible? Who are these two men?"

"Of course, France would disavow their guilt," suavely said the Count. "You know one of the two, I think; a man named Grimm—Luther Grimm."

"Grimm? I've heard of the fellow! Said to be a most unusual agent. Hm! He's playing a bold game for a high stake, eh?"

"Quite so, sire. The other man is—or was—the Vicomte de St. Denis. In res-

cuing my sister-in-law from their clutches, I myself killed St. Denis. The man Grimm escaped us; and took the poor girl with him. I regret to tell you, sire, that her mind seems to have become deranged from what she has suffered at the hands of these scoundrels. She did not even recognize her own sister."

"Good God! This passes all bearing!" Frederick exploded into violent oaths, then got himself in hand. "Go on, go on. Where is she?"

"I suspect, sire, that Grimm is bringing her to Berlin, with the intention of obtaining her inheritance from the bankers involved. I am taking proper measures, in such an event. Knowing that Your Majesty will protect this unfortunate girl—"

"She shall become a ward of the crown," Frederick exclaimed with energy. "But what about proofs? I want proofs of all this to lay before the French ambassador. I want confessions from these scoundrels. This man Grimm must be found, taken alive, and put to the question!"

"That, sire, is my earnest and immediate endeavor. Meantime, his chief assistant is outside."

THE King started. "Here? His chief assistant?"

"Yes, sire; an Englishman by birth, a man of great ability, who has been in the French service until lately." Count Otto delicately helped himself to snuff. "An honest fellow, whose conscience revolted at taking part in such villainy. It was he who provided us with the means of finding the poor girl. I've taken him into my employ, and—"

"Bring him here. Instantly."

Mortlake entered. He spoke very respectfully, with a perfect calmness which was most impressive. For two years an assistant to the French secret agent Luther Grimm, he had finally recoiled in horror, he said, at becoming involved in this hideous plot against a beautiful and innocent girl.

The aroused Frederick examined him severely and in detail. Few men, thus relating a sheer fabrication of lies, could have withstood the piercing questions, the razor-keen wit, the probing eyes, of Frederick; but Mortlake was no ordinary man. He displayed none of his actual animosity toward Luther Grimm, but having acted as a secret agent for years, he knew enough about his own business and that of Grimm to tell a

most convincing story. Also, he himself was practically unknown, while Grimm's *coups* within the past few years had come to general notice.

AT length the King swung around to Osbrock.

"I want this man kept at hand. His sworn statements must be prepared in due form."

"Certainly, sire. They'll be upheld by other witnesses upon their arrival here. Meantime, Mortlake will be of the utmost service in apprehending this man Grimm, should he reach Berlin, and in the rescue of the young lady."

At these words, the one flaming eye of Mortlake flashed to Count Otto with an unspoken question. It was his first intimation that Grimm might be coming here, and that the tissue of falsehoods he had just uttered in regard to the American might have to stand against unpleasant refutation.

"Very well; the affair is in your hands." Frederick suddenly turned upon Mortlake. "Get out!" he barked at the top of his voice. "Out of here! I want to speak with Count von Osbrock in private."

Mortlake bowed and retired. When the door had closed behind him, Frederick fastened his keen and penetrating gaze on the Count.

"Now, Otto, suppose we talk business," he said briskly. "You're the most typical specimen I know of this accursed human race; but in your way, you're valuable. I rather suspect that you engineered the alliance I'm offered with England—the substantial subsidy that will be paid me if I follow my chivalric impulses and make war on France."

The words came with a sneer. The King went on rapidly:

"Without this Courland money, I'll enter no such alliance. To obtain the cash, the young lady must appear before the bankers Arnheim and Pfalzar, here in Berlin, make satisfactory proof of her identity, and sign the releases and receipts. Once she's here, we'll see that she does it; but I don't want anyone else to see that she does it. Do you comprehend?"

An almost imperceptible dew of perspiration stood on Count Otto's brow.

"Perfectly, sire. My men are now watching those two bankers."

"Don't let them leave the city. . . . Now, the Bavarian situation: I can't very well make war on Austria and

France at the same time. If I receive satisfactory proofs that France has really backed this dastardly scheme against Marie of Courland, well and good."

"Your Majesty shall receive them."

"If I don't, then I shall stand up for the poor down-trodden people of Bavaria and become their champion against Austrian rapacity." Another sneer. "So, Otto, if you're interested in seeing the English alliance go through—get to work, produce a confession from this man Grimm, produce your sister-in-law, and get that money. That's all. Clear out!"

Count von Osbrock obeyed, not without relief.

Upon returning to the courtyard where his carriage waited, he found Mortlake also waiting. The one-eyed man followed him to the carriage and got in after him. Neither spoke until the vehicle was on its way; then Mortlake leaned forward.

"So Grimm is coming here, eh? What's happened?"

"Everything," said Count Otto, sniffing at his lace handkerchief. "That man has the devil's own luck! We've been unable to find Marie of Courland. I'm sure Grimm is bringing her here to get the money. Now, for your information, I'll tell you all that has taken place—"

He proceeded to do so.

Mortlake, whose massive features were marked by a certain pallor at all times, said not a word more. He listened without comment to all that Count Otto related; his silence was ominous, pregnant with suppressed and bursting emotions.

OSBROCK had two residences here in Berlin, one in the city, the other in the suburbs. It was to his town house the carriage now proceeded; by the time they reached it, Mortlake had the whole story of the events in the Rhineland. That is to say, the story as Count Otto chose to relate it.

The two men left the carriage, entered the house, and went to a library dark with books and gloomy with stiff old portraits. Once in this room, Mortlake became a different person. His dominant energy, his force of character, seemed to fill the whole place; the expression that crept into his face was terrible. Count Otto regarded him uneasily.

"So you killed St. Denis, eh?" These were Mortlake's first words. "Good! I only wish I'd done it. Now, I know this Luther Grimm; I know what he'll do and how he'll do it. We must act together."

Count Otto thumbed his yellow mustache. "Precisely," he said, and waited. The one flaming eye of Mortlake dwelt upon him intently.

"This woman he's bringing, this Marie of Courland: what do you want done with her? We must have the truth now, at all costs. I must know exactly what end you desire to reach, before we take action."

Count Otto fingered his snuffbox. He had lied heavily to Frederick, which was no light matter. This man Mortlake must make good the lie.

"I don't want her harmed, if that's what you mean," he said nervously. "She must not be injured; but she must be apprehended. Lodge a charge of insanity against her and have her locked up; that's all. The King will deal with her himself; both he and I stand to profit by the matter."

"And you said that I'd profit also if we succeeded in this business," Mortlake said calmly. "To what extent?"

"Half a million francs."

"You take her inheritance; I take a crumb, eh? But it's no crumb to me. For that sum," Mortlake went on with a cold intensity, "I'd guarantee to catch King Frederick or the devil himself! Count it done, if I must go through hell to do it!"

"Uninjured, remember!"

Once again that baleful smile of disdain twisted the lips of Mortlake.

"Have no fear. Probably I know more about the family of Courland than you do, even if you married into it."

Once again uneasiness flitted into the pale blue eyes of Count Otto. Alone with this man, he was far from being the master; and he was unhappily aware of the fact. At this instant, however, a servant knocked and entered.

"Highness! There's a man outside, a courier. He says you know him. His name is Goetz, and—"

"Goetz! Flora's postilion." Count Otto straightened up. "Show him in, quickly!"

A MAN, dust-covered, hollow-eyed, staggering for want of rest and sleep, stumbled into the room.

"Well? What is it? Where is the Countess?" Count Otto demanded.

"In Dortstadt, Highness. She—she sent this."

Count Otto, his eyes very bright and sparkling, seized the sealed paper that the courier extended.

"Good. You may leave; they'll give you food and a place to sleep."

The man staggered out. Count Otto tore open the letter. An expression of savage joy came into his features. He thrust the missive at Mortlake.

"You read French? Here! I was right, I was right!"

The note was a hasty scrawl:

Otto: I am ill; I must come on slowly. Marie was here, disguised as a man. Grimm was with her. They have gone on to Berlin, with a private carriage. Jacques, the old servant of my father, is with them. Adieu.
—Flora.

Mortlake lifted an exultant face.

"I've not seen this girl Marie for some years. You have a picture of her?"

"You've seen my wife? The features are almost identical."

"No. I've not seen your wife for some years either." Mortlake smiled thinly. "My dealings have been with you, not with your wife."

"True. Well, I have a miniature here; I'll give it to you presently."

"Then that's settled." Mortlake drew a deep breath. "My business, however, now lies with Luther Grimm. He's coming here. Hm! You said he was disguised as an obscure notary? Then look out for him in the guise of a fine gentleman, of a prince! I tell you, I know that man's methods of work! He has the audacity of the devil. And I know his face, too; he can't fool me."

Count Otto nodded. "Very well. What now?"

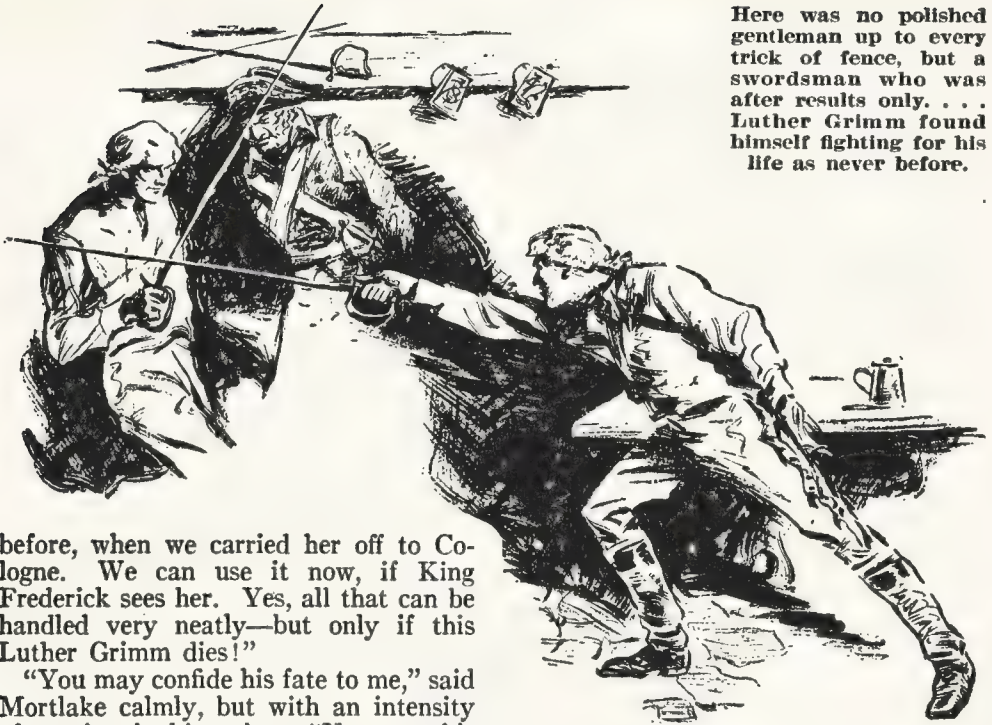
"Work!" A flash of savage energy passed through the one eye, the entire face, of Mortlake. "That courier came from Dortstadt in Saxony, he said? Get maps, maps! I want to see the main highways leading to Berlin."

Count Otto had maps at hand, and spread them out over the big library table. While Mortlake pored over them, Count Otto frowned slightly over his own thoughts, and presently voiced them.

"This Grimm must die before he can do any talking, before he reaches here. Mortlake, be prepared to swear to all you told the King; I'll have other witnesses to back you up in each detail. As to the girl—"

"She is not insane, as you said," Mortlake interrupted.

"Leave that to me. My wife is skillful with drugs; a certain powder will give her all the appearance of insanity for some days at a time. We used it once



Here was no polished gentleman up to every trick of fence, but a swordsman who was after results only. . . . Luther Grimm found himself fighting for his life as never before.

before, when we carried her off to Cologne. We can use it now, if King Frederick sees her. Yes, all that can be handled very neatly—but only if this Luther Grimm dies!”

“You may confide his fate to me,” said Mortlake calmly, but with an intensity of passion in his voice. “You see this blind eye? The tip of a rapier did it, in London. The rapier was in the hand of Luther Grimm. When he might have killed me, he merely blinded one eye, and went his way.”

“He made a great mistake,” said Count Otto thoughtfully.

“He did.” Mortlake went on in his phlegmatic way: “He is dangerous. You might kill St. Denis, but you could not kill him. He has something few men possess—the power of killing the man who faces him with a sword. This is not a question of fence, of skill, of finesse or luck. It’s something inside him. If you ran this man Grimm through the heart, he would still kill you.”

“I understand what you mean, being something of a swordsman myself,” Count Otto said softly. “You seem to admire him.”

“I hate him with all my soul,” was the calm reply. “But I don’t underestimate him. And I don’t intend to meet him sword in hand, either. Now look at the map. I see two possible routes here from Dortstadt, two places where he might be caught. We should do this as distant as possible from Berlin. He may come here direct by way of Kyritz, or around through Wittenberg. Am I correct?”

Count Otto nodded, alertly.

“Yes. One of us must go to Kyritz, the other to Wittenberg.”

“And neither of us must go alone.”

“Right.” Count Otto dabbed at his mustache. “Shall we say—three men with each of us? Not police, but officers, swordsmen. We’ve no lack of splendid talent here in the King’s service, soldiers of fortune, gentlemen who ask no questions. Hm! I’ll give you the best of them, Mortlake, since you’re no swordsman.”

“Let us say, Chevalier de Castine; he outpointed me with foils a few weeks ago, and has few equals with the steel. Seingalt, that rascal of a Dane who has killed half a dozen men in duels—the same deadly quality you mentioned, Mortlake. And for the third, to be certain, let’s say that rakehell Hungarian captain of hussars, Baron Horvath. He’s superb with the saber, actually superb. Suppose you take these three; they’ll each have a soldier as lackey, giving you six men. Enough? I’ll pick others to ride with me.”

“Very well.” The one flaming eye of Mortlake danced with an infernal satisfaction. “But these men are officers. They’ll not take orders from me.”

“They’ll take my orders, and my money; never fear, they’re not fine gentlemen to be overparticular.” And a thin smile twisted Count Otto’s little yellow mustache. “I must obtain leave for them, pay them, and send them here to

ride with you. I have a dozen horses here, more in the stables of the house outside town; take your pick. In an hour, your three men will be here, with their servants."

Mortlake nodded. "Still one thing more: the likeness of this lady who's worth half a million francs to me."

Count Otto went to a desk, opened it, and brought to light a miniature set in a frame of gold and brilliants.

"Here; the sisters are almost exactly similar. But be careful! Her beauty, her youth, her sex, might tempt you!"

"Nothing can tempt me, where it's a question of half a million francs," Mortlake rejoined calmly, and handed back the miniature. "I'll know her again, disguised or not; she has changed quite a little since I last saw her. Now for the final detail: Knowing Grimm as I do, I fancy that he'll circle around and come by way of Wittenberg. He may not, of course. Which of us goes where?"

Count Otto shrugged lightly.

"As you like; it's indifferent to me. I'll go to Kyritz, you to Wittenberg. But waste no time getting there!"

"I'll waste neither time nor words, on this errand," Mortlake said grimly.

CHAPTER IX

UPON an early afternoon Luther Grimm saw the old gates of Wittenberg opening ahead. A good day's run was already behind them, and Berlin was a scant sixty miles farther. All promised well.

These days of travel, of rest, of good food and better companionship, had worked a startling change in Grimm. The old fire had come back into his eyes. His hurts bothered him no more, and were forgotten; indeed, a debonair and reckless gayety unusual to him had crept into his manner.

The girl opened the flap behind the driver's back, and spoke with Jacques.

"Don't go to the post tavern. Instead, drive on through town and go to the Roten Hahn. It's an old inn on the farther side of town, and much safer for us. We'll leave M. Grimm there, and you can bring me back into town."

They rattled through the ancient, narrow streets of the old university city. Before reaching the Elbe, their road swung northward, on outside town again, and the horses came to a halt in the court of a massive old tavern.

"If I'm to return here as a woman, I'd better not appear as a man now." And Marie, laughing, refused to follow Grimm from the carriage. "I'll get everything I need, go to a hairdresser's, and the transformation will be complete. I'll need a couple of hours at least. We'd better leave the luggage in the carriage until I return. You can see about the rooms. You have money?"

"Plenty. Good luck!" and Grimm waved his hand blithely as the carriage started off, heading back to town. He turned to the landlord and the disappointed grooms. "Later, my friends, later! We'll want two private rooms, also quarters for our driver, but meantime there's no haste. I'll have something to eat, and a bottle of your best wine."

THE day was chill, lowering with fog and low clouds, threatening rain. A good day to be off the roads, reflected Grimm.

With a sigh of relaxation, he settled down at a corner table in the main room of the tavern, and loosened his sword-belt. The mammoth fireplace with its spits and chains held a fire for cooking, but the huge tiled porcelain stove was fireless at this season.

Grimm looked about the main room of the ancient tavern with quick interest. It was a vast place, overhung by blackened oak beams of enormous size. The walls were hung about with weapons of all kinds, relics of the wars that had burst over Prussia during these past hundred years.

The landlord, bringing bread and cold meat and wine, shook his head at Grimm's question. The place was two hundred years old and more, he said.

"But it's not what it was, Excellency. When the Austrians were here, eighteen years ago, they left everything bare as a bone. You see those sabers hanging behind the stove? They came from some of the Hungarian cavalry who were killed just outside here. Ah! We have more customers. Your Highness has brought us luck today."

Horses had clattered into the inn yard. Luther Grimm paid no heed, for he was curiously examining the armor close at hand. His table was close to a short flight of six stairs which ascended to a raised floor—a room for banqueting parties, no doubt. These steps were flanked by two ancient suits of massive armor set upon posts, each one holding in its steel gauntlets a weapon. One held an im-

mense two-handed Swiss sword; the other, rather incongruously, held a Hungarian saber.

Suddenly Luther Grimm started up, listening. A voice reached him faintly from the courtyard. He frowned, then rose and made his way across to a window that opened on the inn yard.

"Nonsense, of course," he muttered. "And yet I'd know that calm, penetrating voice of Mortlake's anywhere!"

He stood at the window. A man, hatted and cloaked, had just turned his horse and was riding away; he was out of the courtyard and gone. The others in the party held the questing gaze of Grimm. Three officers, he saw, in gay uniforms, and as many lackeys, soldier-servants. The man who had just departed must have been one of the party.

Nothing here, reflected Luther Grimm, to remind him of Mortlake. He had fancied a resemblance in one of the voices—sheer imagination! The three officers were grouped about the landlord, who looked frightened and was arguing with them: a Frenchman, a brawny Norman with red mustache and swaggering air; another, a thin and impassive-looking man, with a queer, indefinable suggestion of a death's head in his sunken features; the third was slim, dark, laughing, a man all fire and impulse, in a hussar officer's uniform, with saber dangling against his knee. Grimm looked again at the first, the brawny Norman, and then went back to his seat, frowning.

"Hm! Three wild blades there—and certainly I know that fellow with the red mustache!" He probed at memory; then his face cleared. "Castine; that's the name. Chevalier de Castine. He was turned out of the army three years ago for some disgraceful affair. I remember, yes; he was a fencer of great skill. So now he's in the Prussian service, like half the adventurers in Europe! Well, I wish Frederick joy of him."

INTO the big tavern room came the three officers, swaggering and talking loudly. The thin, impassive man with face like a skull, was speaking in German.

"So our friend will be back, will he? I tell you, I don't like that fellow. I don't like Englishmen."

"Well, spend your money and don't vent your spleen on the man who provides it," exclaimed the Chevalier, twisting his red mustache and glancing about. "Here, let's have a table and be comfort-

able. You say you know this place, Baron Horvath. Any decent wine here?"

"The best in the world, my friends!" the Hungarian cried gayly. He turned to the landlord, who had followed them in. "Fetch some of that Tokay, a dozen bottles, and then clear out. Don't bother us unless we call for you. Give our men food and wine, feed the horses, and leave us alone."

The three settled themselves at a table, and the landlord brought in bottles of wine, for which he was promptly paid.

GRI MM regarded them in some astonishment and more amusement. Now and again their glances touched on him but showed no interest. A queer trio, he thought; the big Norman, ruffling it with many an oath; the thin man, whom they called Seingalt, with something about him that was cold and deadly; and the merry, impetuous Hungarian, who was a handsome fellow.

So the man who had left them and ridden away was an Englishman! Grimm felt an uneasy twinge. That English voice—certainly it had made him think of Mortlake. However, his imagination must have jumped at conclusions there.

He went on with his meal. A soldier came in, approached the three officers, saluted Castine and spoke with him. One of the three strikers or lackeys. Another salute and he departed. The three officers laughed and fell into low talk among themselves; they appeared to be settling some argument. Grimm kept a casual but interested eye on them.

At length Baron Horvath, the Hungarian, laughed gayly and his voice lifted.

"Bah! I don't care what the fellow told us. I don't care how famous a swordsman our man may be. I do know Castine's the best blade in the Army—even better than you, Seingalt. You Danes are too stiff in the wrist. Oh, I admit you may kill your man more quickly, but you'd lose on points. Fencing and killing aren't the same thing, by a long shot! I'll bet you twenty rix-dollars that Castine finishes the business inside five minutes."

"Done with you," said the gloomy Dane. "It's a bet—remember it!"

Grimm understood now. These officers had ridden from Berlin, no doubt, to meet with some one else and settle a dispute of honor; it was a question of a duel. And here in this very room, perhaps, since they had all been so insistent on being left alone.

That their insistence on this point was no mere passing fancy, presently was made clear when the landlord came back into the big room. With him was a serving-wench, bringing fowl to set on the spits at the hearth.

The three officers erupted in a storm of angry oaths. Horvath, with a laugh, leaped up and went to the girl, swept his arm around her, and kissed her heartily. The wench struggled against him, caught up a goose in one hand, and swinging it by the neck, began to lambaste him over the head.

A scream of protest broke from the landlord, but now Seingalt and Castine were upon him, angrily sending him out with a kick and a volley of curses. He fled. The Hungarian was roaring with laughter and dodging the blows of the girl. Seingalt tried to interfere, caught the naked goose across the face full force, and went staggering. Castine, however, pinioned the arms of the wench and rushed her out of the room, while Baron Horvath doubled up against the wall with laughter, as the angry and chagrined Seingalt picked himself up.

Luther Grimm, looking on, broke into laughter himself at the scene. The three officers, returning to their table, caught sight of his expression and stopped short. All three stared at him. In their faces he read an ominous concentration.

"Your pardon, gentlemen, your pardon," he exclaimed. "Upon my word, I was laughing with you, not at you!"

The Chevalier made a gesture to his companions.

"To you, the doors," he said briefly. "To me, the man."

THEN, swinging around, he strode toward Grimm. The other two men sauntered off: the Dane to the kitchen doorway, the Hungarian to that opening on the courtyard. And suddenly Luther Grimm awakened to approaching trouble. He recalled the voice of the Englishman.

"I believe you may find better amusement," said the Chevalier ominously, halting and eying him straitly. "Are you not Monsieur Luther Grimm, the gentleman whose skill with the rapier has astonished Paris?"

They knew him—they knew him! In a flash, Grimm realized the truth.

"No," he said coolly. His harsh features tensed, gave darker significance to his whimsical response. "No; it has astonished nobody, I assure you. The dead, monsieur, are never astonished."

Castine twirled his mustache and puffed out his cheeks.

"Ha! Loud words, my friend, loud words! You displease me. Perhaps you are not aware with whom you deal?"

Grimm had already made up his mind, determined his course. These three men were here to kill him. If they attacked him all at once, he was lost. Since they had already arranged to take him in turn, he must hold them to that arrangement—and do what he could. But at the thought of Marie back in the town, of that Englishman who had ridden away, he went cold. Mortlake, of course.

"I'm entirely aware of it," he broke in coldly. "The reputation of the Chevalier de Castine is very well known, and bears out his present occupation as a hired assassin."

CASTINE flushed and clapped hand to sword-hilt.

"You insult me, you rascal?"

"If that were possible," said Grimm coolly. "I sha'n't ask who paid you for this job; I can guess the answer. But before you put me out of my unhappy life, pray tell me one thing: The Englishman who was with you when you arrived—did he have only one eye?"

"Yes," said Castine, with a savage scowl.

That settled it. Grimm's manner changed. An icy calm settled in his gaze, as it flicked from Castine to the other two.

"I see." His voice whipped out scornfully. "And you left your pistols with your horses, your men outside? Why, gentlemen, I'm surprised at such chivalry! You came here to kill me—surely you don't expect to give me a chance for life?"

The Hungarian laughed out, from the door he guarded.

"The very fact that we're here removes all chances, *mon ami*!"

"You think well of yourselves, eh?"

"Enough talk; we're not assassins," exclaimed the Chevalier angrily—the more so because they were, in effect, assassins, and he knew it well. "You have the appearance of a gentleman. Draw, then! I've no desire to kill an unarmed man."

"Thank you, monsieur," said Grimm.

He bared his rapier; a very fair weapon, though nothing of which to boast. He unbuckled the belt, and with it removed his coat, and gave the Norman a thin smile.

"Let me repay your chivalry," he said with light mockery. "This is not a duel, it seems, but a bit of unpleasant work to be got over with as soon as possible. Yet it would be distinctly unfair, did you meet me while encumbered by your coat. And it might even spoil the invention of my friend Raffini."

Castine, scowling suspiciously, stepped back and began to remove his uniform coat, watching Grimm narrowly for fear of some trick.

"Who the devil is your friend Raffini?" he demanded.

Luther Grimm laughed a little, as he tried the balance of his rapier.

"Oh, he's an Italian who came to Paris last year. He invented a most pleasing little touch, a new sort of parade in *prime*; I shall be delighted to show it to you, my dear Chevalier, although it will cause your friend Baron Horvath to lose his wager, by a good three minutes."

"Crow, cockerel, crow!" The Norman caught up his sword and strode forward. "Ready? *En garde*—"

The two men saluted, touched blades—and the two slivers of steel hung in air.

Grimm was frightfully aware of the truth: Mortlake had brought these men here, had set them on him, then had departed hastily. It all argued the one frightful certainty, that the Englishman would seize Marie, and then return here.

Assured of this, Luther Grimm settled implacably to work. A slight, bitter smile twisted his lips. The Chevalier attacked with a burst of fury, but Grimm's rapier hung almost motionless in a seeming miracle of defense.

"Careful!" he said lightly. "I sha'n't waste more than the one thrust—remember, the parade in *prime*! It's really a charming novelty. A pity that you can't carry away the memory of it, but that will be impossible. The fact that you don't know Raffini renders the outcome certain."

Sweat was starting on the Norman's broad features, as he found himself unable to pierce that defense. Fury grew upon him. He began to lose his head. With a rush, he flew in to a savage attack. A gasp of exultation broke from him as an opening appeared, as Grimm's arm and steel lifted high; he sent in a vicious thrust, straight and true, for the heart—

The thrust ended in air. Grimm's point darted down, darted in, and was gone again. The American leaped backward and stood panting.

"It's a pity to kill you, but that's my business," said Horvath. "Pick up your blade, my friend." "Wait!" Grimm gasped. "If it's money you're after, I can pay you—"



"Twenty rix-dollars lost, Baron Horvath!" he exclaimed in grim jest. "Pay up, pay up!"

The Chevalier seemed paralyzed. A smear of scarlet suddenly gushed from his throat and lips, spreading over his shirt. He dropped his sword, clapped both hands to his throat, took a step backward and another step; his knees gave way and he pitched down in a heap.

"No need to examine him. That stroke never fails," said Luther Grimm harshly.

The Dane sprang forward, stooped above the fallen Castine, then rose.

Ferocity was in his sunken features, as he stripped off cross-belts and uniform coat.

"Try it on me, if you like," he snarled.

Grimm measured him briefly, stood relaxed, controlling his heaving breath, hoping for time here. Baron Horvath, his eyes alight, came forward.

"No need to guard the doors," he said. "This man isn't running from us. You win the wager, Seingalt—payment later, if you live! Evidently that Englishman told us the truth. This fellow knows how to use a sword."

Luther Grimm waited. In the face, in the manner of this Dane, he perceived the killer. Here was no polished gentleman up to every trick of fence, but a more dangerous swordsman, one born and not made, who was after results only. No repeating that thrust with this man, who had just seen it work and was now prepared for it.

"You gentlemen are still intent on earning your pay?" said Grimm acidly.

Seingalt, for response, came striding at him with intent eyes. Small head, long agile arms, a wrist like steel. There was no salute. The Dane came straight in with a swiftly vicious lunge of his blade, and steel clashed and slithered.

Abruptly, Luther Grimm found himself fighting for his life as never before.

Silent, venomous, unwinking eyes like those of a rattlesnake—the man was death personified. His very air was calculated to freeze an opponent into panic. Grimm stood like a wall to the attack, then leaped backward as Seingalt broke into motion. The two moved about swiftly, in a rippling flow of action, springing in and out, steel darting; the very blades seemed alive and fluid.

MINUTES passed. Neither man had an advantage. Grimm was wholly on the defensive; he evaded trick after trick, parried almost blindly. This was fighting, not mere fence. Suddenly Seingalt disengaged, leaped backward, threw his sword from one hand to the other and drove in again—rapier in his left hand, now.

Almost did the trick catch Grimm napping. He felt a slight prick, heard a cry from the Hungarian, saw the blaze in Seingalt's eyes as the touch of red appeared on his shirt, and desperately called up every energy. A mere prick, but an inch more would have been death.

The Dane pressed in savagely, but now Grimm was bringing his brains into play.

He attacked in turn, engaging Seingalt on the outside of the arm, trying to get under the arm with a *glissade*, sweeping repeatedly into a counter in *carte*. With any other man, this would have meant disarming him, but the Dane only laughed and evaded. Again Grimm found himself on the defensive. Now it was Seingalt who was trying to disarm him, and he bent every effort to meet the attack. The two men were steaming, eyes straining, rapiers quivering.

THE Dane began to give. Grimm's heart leaped as he met the look of fear in those glittering eyes. He pressed in with a dazzling display of feints and *ripostes*. In the midst, he stepped in the pool of blood that had come from the body of Castine. His foot slipped. He lost balance.

Seingalt's blade curled about his, tore it from his hand, and sent it hurtling across the room. Grimm plunged down. He had one flashing glimpse of the Dane poised above him, darting in the finishing stroke.

Not for nothing had Luther Grimm, along the Pennsylvania frontier, risked his neck in wrestling matches with Daniel Morgan and many another backwoods champion. In the very act of falling, he twisted about. As he struck the floor and gained purchase, his foot flew out and struck the Dane's ankle. That vicious death-lunge was spoiled. Grimm rolled aside. His hand found the fallen rapier of the Norman, and he was up like a cat, up and almost breast to breast with Seingalt.

His left hand flew up and struck the Dane full in the face. As the cursing Seingalt staggered back, Grimm straightened; the rapier in his hand ran the man through the body. Then he stumbled away, panting, dabbing the sweat out of his eyes, until he came against one of those posts bearing armored figures. He clung to it, exhausted.

There was a crash. Grimm's eyes cleared, to see Seingalt fallen, and the Hungarian leaning over him.

"Ha! That saves me paying the wager." Baron Horvath straightened up, an excited laugh on his lips, his eyes shining. He flung off his *pelisse* and *sabretache* and belt; the curved saber was in his hand, its loop about his wrist.

His lungs afire, his nerves quivering with exhaustion, Grimm knew himself unable to meet any attack from this man. The rapier in his hand was useless

against that slashing weapon. He let it fall, and it clanked to the floor. Horvath halted.

"Come, come! Pick it up. It's a pity to kill you, but that's my business. The money goes to me, instead of being split among three, and so much the better. However, pick up your blade, my friend."

Aching muscles, weariness, sword-arm like lead—Grimm stirred a little. Metal clinked under his hand. He was clinging to the armored figure which held the saber. His brain wakened; time, a moment of time, anything for time!

"Wait!" he gasped. "If—if it's money you're after—I can pay you—"

"No, no, it's a matter of honor, my dear fellow!" The Hungarian laughed wildly. "Besides, see what you've done to my comrades!"

"At least," said Grimm, "two of you have helped pay for my friend-St. Denis."

"I never heard of him, but you're about to pay for these two gentlemen." And the Baron swished his saber lightly. "That rascally Englishman will soon be back here with your lady—he promised to bring her—and I can't disappoint him."

Mortlake, back here with Marie! A burst of energy surged through Luther Grimm at the thought. The spell that bound him was broken. Strength flooded into his hand, as he plucked at the saber held between the fingers of the steel gauntlet. It came away in his hand, and he sprang on guard.

"Hello!" A laugh broke from the lips of Horvath. "Upon my word, one could almost admire such a fellow! Ready?"

"Almost." Grimm's pounding heart was lessening its strokes. "Did you ever hear of the Polish noble in Vienna—Pan Lichestski?"

Horvath's eyes widened.

"Lichestski? Who hasn't heard of that man?" he exclaimed. "Why, they say he's a magician! The greatest master of the saber in the world, that fellow. What put him into your head?"

LUTHER GRIMM, controlling his sobbing breath, smiled thinly. Every instant of time meant much now.

"He told me, once, that there's one thing even the greatest master of the saber forgets."

"And what is that?" demanded Baron Horvath curiously.

"Ah! He also told me it was something never to be told—only shown."

"You knew him?"

"I was his pupil for six months."

"Then," said the Baron, as he moved forward, "I certainly was a fool to let you get your breath. At you!"

And with a swinging rush, a stamp of feet, a whistle of the blade in his hand, he was attacking like a whirlwind.

GRI MM stood between those two figures of ancient armor and met the attack unmoving. Frantic desperation held him cool, composed; from the first moment, he realized that if he tried any attack, he was lost. Here was a master of the weapon, a man whose agility and skill far outshone his own.

He stood like a rock. Horvath beat at him from every side; the clang of the steel reëchoed from the black rafters, as the blades clashed together. Almost too rapidly for eye to follow whirled that flaming steel—but Grimm's eye followed it; his own blade met the back-drawn slash each time. The curved steel above his head flashed ever in an arc that yielded not.

The Hungarian, white teeth showing in a snarl, slashed low for the knees, slashed in from one side or the other, always found that glinting wall of steel before him and could not break it. He feinted, deliberately left openings, gave Grimm repeated chances to whip in a lightning blow—and the American refused each offer.

None the less, it was a fresh man against a wearied man.

Sparks were dancing before Grimm's eyes. Every effort was toilsome, now; his arm was giving out. Only blind desperation, a stubborn determination, held him to the task, forced him to await the time for the one thing he could do.

The Hungarian was winning, and knew it. Exultation filled his sweating visage; he pressed his attack with a superhuman energy, a deadly precision. Obviously the American was weakening fast, meeting each slash, each cut, more slowly.

Horvath leaped back, dashed sweat from his eyes, peered at Grimm.

"So there's one thing every *beau sabreur* forgets, eh?" he panted. "Well, you'll never get a chance to tell me now."

And he was in again with a terrific cut that Grimm barely managed to parry. He meant to finish the business now; he launched a dazzling assault, blade whistling, his eyes flaming with fury.

"What is it, what is it?" he gasped, as he slashed in and in, until they were almost breast to breast. "Speak up! What is it—before I kill you?"

Grimm suddenly stepped backward, parried again, moved too fast for eye to catch.

"That—that the saber—has a point!" he croaked out, as his blade drove.

His hoarse croak was echoed by a frightful cry from the Hungarian. Grimm's point had plunged into his breast, and was out again.

Horvath caught his blade in both hands. Blood foamed on his lips; his eyes were distended and horrible. He

"Three for St. Denis," muttered Luther Grimm.

Still dazed, Grimm struggled to his feet and stood swaying, weak in every muscle. He staggered over to his own table and collapsed weakly in a chair. He reached for the wine in front of him but was unable to lift it to his lips. His body slumped in utter exhaustion; sparks were flying before his eyes.

From the courtyard came a roll of wheels, a clatter of hoofs. Mortlake!



flung himself forward; his saber whirled; he brought it down in a terrible slash. Grimm had ducked away. The blade struck the figure of ancient armor and sheared through both helmet and gorget.

Grimm, ducking low, was hit by the falling helmet. It caught him over the ear and sent him sprawling headlong, dazed and half stunned. With a frantic effort he tried to gain his feet, only to collapse on the steps, his lungs afire and his senses all aswim, helpless to move.

He was dimly aware of a low groan and a crashing thud as the Hungarian went down. . . .

Presently Grimm's eyes cleared a little, and with an effort he lifted his hand to his head. The skin was not broken; he was unhurt. Baron Horvath, six feet away, was struggling to one elbow, was looking at him, was trying to speak.

"You—you were right," came the words on blood-bubbling lips, with ghastly grin. "One—one remembers that fact—too late."

The man's head fell, and jesting to the last, he smiled and died.

Grimm made a convulsive effort. He started up, gasped out a low groan, and swayed limply forward across the table. He was done; he was utterly exhausted.

CHAPTER X

THE dark little shops of Wittenberg were echoing now and again to strangely unwonted merriment and bursts of laughter. For here was a gayly cloaked gallant buying feminine attire, no less; in fact, the most intimate of feminine attire, while a dusty carriage waited in the street and the withered Jacques carried out the parcels.

At these close quarters Marie was not too successful with her manly pose, since her voice betrayed her, however huskily she lowered it. Now, however, this mattered very little.

The purchases were all made at last, and Jacques drove to a very handsome establishment on the Marktplatz, where the chief hairdresser of the town held forth. Marie went in with her parcels, while outside the carriage waited.

In this place Marie openly revealed her secret and prepared for her change back to woman's estate.

At last it was finished. Now she was clad as best became her, the Spanish cloak over her gown of stiff velvet, and a necklace about her throat. The black stain was washed out of cropped hair and arching brows. With a muslin catch-all spread above her garments, she sat in the hairdresser's chair to have her hair dried and curled—to conceal its short length.

A man came past the window as she sat there—a man whose hat was pulled so low over his face as to conceal his eyes, or rather eye; for he had but one. He glanced in as he passed, then peered sharply into the place.

Marie was too absorbed in her own metamorphosis to pay any attention to loiterers in the street. Her hair shimmered gold, once more, and it was built up with switches cleverly pinned fast.

When she had admired the work in the big mirror, she paid her bill and adjusted a fine lace shawl about her head. Humming a gay tune, she started out to the carriage. The head of old Jacques had sunk on his breast; he was asleep.

Smiling, Marie looked up at her old retainer. The hairdresser's clerk came out, bearing the only one of her purchases that was not upon her back at the moment. This was a large and handsome case of toilet accessories. Having the bag of gold still in the carriage, she had spent without stint.

Before a shop-front near by, the man with one eye was standing in talk with two other men, police by their somber uniforms; all three were watching her intently.

"Jacques!" she exclaimed, laughing. "Jacques! Wake up!"

He came awake with a start. In confusion, he began to clamber down to open the carriage door; but the grinning hairdresser's clerk forestalled him.

"Put the case inside," Marie ordered the clerk.

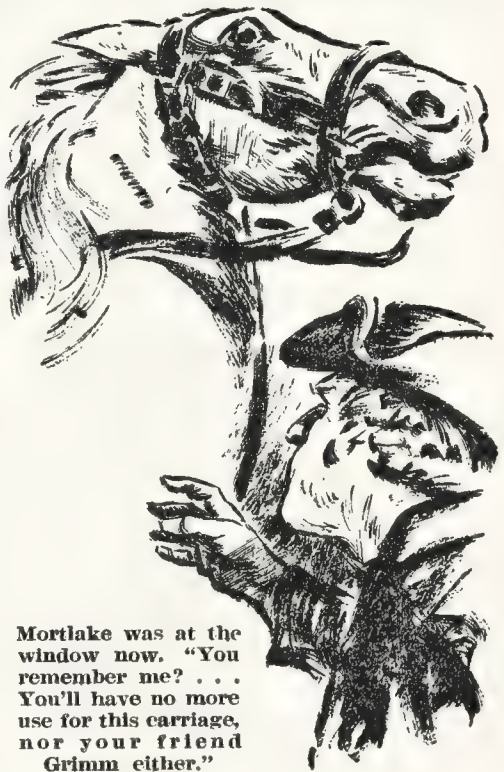
He did so, and held open the door. She got into the carriage. Eager, delighted with her new appearance, she settled down on the seat. Opening the case, she took out a mirror to view her features again.

Like the other fittings of the toilet case, the mirror was handsome. It was a large round glass set in a flat round frame and backing of chased copper; it was ornate, substantial and extremely heavy. Marie snatched a hasty glance at her hair, adjusted the clasp of the cloak at her throat, then looked up as Jacques came to the open window and addressed her.

"Where now, madam?"

"Oh! Back to the Roten Hahn, of course. Do I look all right?"

Jacques complimented her and started back to his seat. Then, glancing through



Mortlake was at the window now. "You remember me? . . . You'll have no more use for this carriage, nor your friend Grimm either."

the window-opening at her side, Marie glimpsed something that drew the color from her cheeks and widened her startled gaze.

The two police were moving toward the horses' heads; the other man was coming to the carriage window. That face, that one flaming eye—she had seen it in Treves, though the man had not remarked her there. She had remembered it in dreams; she had spoken of it to Luther Grimm. The face of the man who had ruined her family. The face of the Englishman Mortlake!

The heart failed in her. He was at the window, now, peering in at her, one hand on the door.

GUNPOWDER GOLD

"A moment, madam, if you please," he said in French. At sight of her, shrinking, horrified, gripped by recognition and fear, he smiled grimly. "You remember me, do you? Well, you'll have no more use for this carriage, nor your friend Grimm either."

Mortlake! She knew they were both surprised and trapped. Almost unconscious of her action, with one convulsive spasm of sheer terror, she struck out at that deadly, flaming eye. A wild cry burst from her.

"Drive, Jacques, drive!"

Jacques, himself startled by the appearance of the two police, curled his whip. The horses leaped. The police shouted in vain, then scrambled away.

Marie, unaware that Mortlake had disappeared from sight and was not following, sat frozen with terror, while the carriage went careering on its way.

But the Englishman was in no condition to do any following. When the girl lashed out with all her frantic strength, the chiseled edge of that mirror struck him full above the eyes; and he went down senseless as the carriage darted off.

Jacques drove like a madman through the narrow streets, until for the sake of safety Marie slowed him down. She opened the panel, with frantic words.

"The police—they must have been waiting for us. Mortlake himself! We can't spend the night here now. Reach the inn, get Monsieur Grimm, and hasten on, anywhere! I don't know what to do. You run in and get him, at the inn."

The horses speeded again. They were past Luther's Oak, rolling out of town and on to the Roten Hahn. The bulk of it rose before them, and Jacques tooled the carriage into the courtyard. Other horses stood at one side; a tumult of frightened cries came to them. Grooms and landlord stood bawling and cursing.

Ignoring the lot of them, the old servitor was already scrambling down. He went at a run and vanished in the doorway; after a moment, Marie heard a faint cry, as though horror had seized upon him. She leaned forward, anxiously. The landlord and grooms, who appeared too terrified to approach her, made no reply to any question. Then Jacques reappeared. He was dragging Luther Grimm along with him, helping him into coat and wig and hat, shoving him toward the carriage.

Exciting episodes follow in swift succession as this fine novel moves to its dramatic climax—in our forthcoming September issue.



*Why should a hard citizen have
a nice little rabbit in his car?
The starting point of a strange
story of Tiny David and the
State Police—*

By ROBERT
R. MILL

SERGEANT HENRY LINTON was not happy. His complaint-slips on this particular day had included the loss of two chickens by a farmer, a dog loved by fond owners but feared by neighbors, and a case of truancy—hardly things to capture the imagination and interest of a two-fisted member of the Black Horse Troop, New York State Police. To add to Mr. Linton's woes, the man sitting beside him in the troop car, Trooper Joseph Marvin, was a rookie; and breaking in new men was not the sergeant's idea of wholesome sport.

The complaints having been disposed of more or less to the satisfaction of all concerned, Mr. Linton, picking his way through the traffic of Tranquil Lake, and heading for the sub-station near by, concentrated on the rookie, Marvin.

"How come you signed up with this outfit?" demanded Mr. Linton.

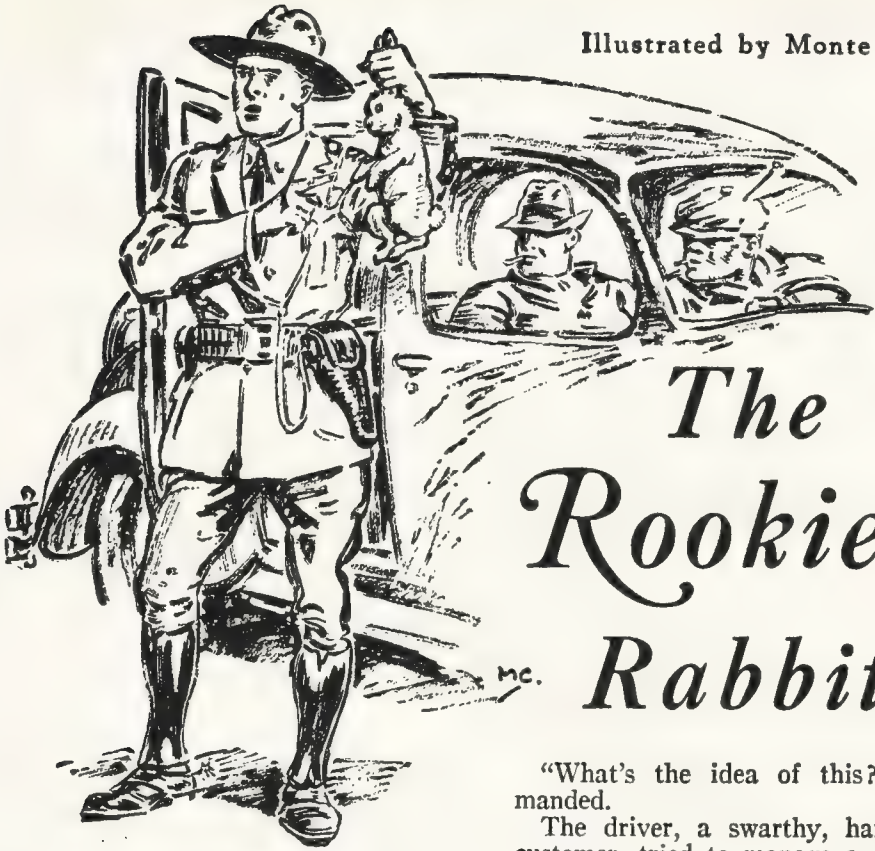
"I don't know," Mr. Marvin admitted after a slight pause.

"Neither do I," declared Mr. Linton with heartfelt emphasis. "But here you are; and while you remain, we'd better make the best of it. Think you remember anything I told you?"

"Yes," said Mr. Marvin.

Mr. Linton's expression denoted doubt, but he halted the car and gazed at an

Illustrated by Monte Crews



The Rookie's Rabbit

automobile approaching swiftly from the north.

"That baby is going much too fast," he ruled. "I don't go in for pestering the public, but they will have to suffer with me until we get you what passes for an education. Tumble out, stop that guy, and give him a check. I'll sit here and be your public." There was a note of tender care in his voice. "Don't get hurt."

Mr. Marvin obeyed, and turned in a creditable performance of stopping the approaching car, demanding the license of the driver and the registration card, and then cautioning the driver against excessive speed. Mr. Linton, watching through half-closed eyes, and hoping for the worst, could find no fault with the technique.

"And now that we are all pals together," continued Mr. Marvin, "I'll just take a look through this bus."

There were no protests from the two men on the front seat of the sedan as Mr. Marvin threw open the rear door and thrust his head and shoulders into the compartment. He emerged holding a live rabbit by the ears.

"What's the idea of this?" he demanded.

The driver, a swarthy, hard-looking customer, tried to manage a grin.

"I take that home for my little girl."

Mr. Marvin appealed to Mr. Linton:

"How about it?"

Mr. Linton discarded his cigarette in favor of the problem.

"As far as I know," he ruled, "there is no law against his having a little girl. And that is a tame rabbit, so he hasn't broken the conservation law."

Mr. Marvin shrugged his shoulders. He returned the rabbit.

"On your way," he ordered.

THE sedan had disappeared, and the troop car had covered some distance when Mr. Linton opened up.

"What made you ask me about that outfit?"

Mr. Marvin hesitated.

"I don't just know," he admitted. "It looked and sounded a little screwy. Those birds aren't the type to take rabbits to little girls."

Mr. Linton gazed at his companion with new interest.

"You may amount to something," he admitted. "That's something you can't teach 'em—sizing up a picture and finding what's wrong with it." His enthusiasm vanished. "Your intelligence didn't

extend to remembering his name and address, did it?"

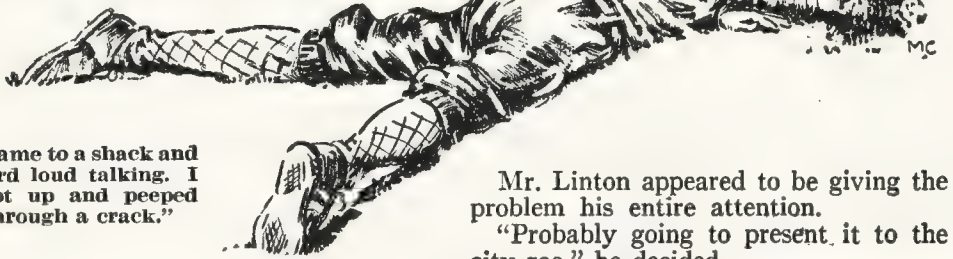
"Yes," said Mr. Marvin. He produced paper and pencil, and wrote, "*Joseph Selznock, 397 Hawley Avenue, Syrport.*"

"Now I can die happy," declared Mr. Linton. "And the license-number?"

Despair appeared on Mr. Marvin's face.

"I forgot that," he admitted.

Mr. Linton sighed with resignation, removed one hand from the wheel,



"I came to a shack and heard loud talking. I crept up and peeped through a crack."

grabbed the pencil and scribbled a number on the paper held by Marvin.

"Quite right," he told the long-suffering Mr. Marvin. "One thing at a time. Don't overtax your intellect. You didn't bother with his pal's name, did you?"

"No," said Mr. Marvin. "I didn't think—"

"Right," interrupted Mr. Linton. "Never think. We have high-priced experts for that. But asking a guy his name and address doesn't require much thinking. Write it down, so you won't forget it in the future."

"Yes sir," said Mr. Marvin. "What do you think—"

"I never think," declared Mr. Linton. "I am not high-priced, and I am not an expert."

At the sub-station Mr. Linton went to work on the teletype, and soon there was action: The barracks of the Black Horse Troop had nothing on Mr. Selznock. The Syrport police had nothing definite, but they believed Mr. Selznock was connected with the rackets in some way, and had been in trouble with the Federal people. "More later," they promised. The addition came from the Syrport office of the Secret Service. Agents there said Mr. Selznock was suspected of being connected with an extortion and counterfeiting gang, and that he had been picked up once, but discharged because of lack of evidence.

"What do you think they were doing with that rabbit?" demanded Mr. Marvin, who was an interested spectator.

Mr. Linton appeared to be giving the problem his entire attention.

"Probably going to present it to the city zoo," he decided.

They had finished their evening meal when they had company in the form of Lieutenant Edward David.

"Hello, cheap-help," was his greeting.

Mr. Linton surveyed him without enthusiasm.

"What brought you here, Tiny?"

That question was mere routine. Mr. David, as Mr. Linton well knew, followed the teletype religiously. The messages had contained a hint of action. Mr. David tried to keep all appointments with action.

"Not a thing," declared the big man, in answer to the question. "Just happened to be going by. Anything on your mind?"

"Nothing much," said Mr. Linton.

Mr. Marvin, however, could contain himself no longer.

"If it please the Lieutenant—"

"Yes?" said Tiny David.

"What would two tough mugs be doing with a live rabbit, sir?"

"Rollo," said Mr. Linton, "it's past your bedtime. Say good night to the gentlemen, and—"

"Two?" interrupted Tiny David.

Mr. Marvin flushed.

"There was some confusion at the—er—at the scene of the crime," Mr. Linton explained. "The name of the party of the second part eluded us."

Mr. Marvin flashed him a glance of gratitude.

Tiny David's eyes were twinkling.

"I understand. My first week on the job I ran into a lot of that same confusion." He turned to Linton. "I'll duck

into the office and do some high-grade telephoning."

Linton accompanied him. It was Tiny David who explained to the rookie when they returned:

"Called a pal of mine with the Secret Service in Syrtport. He knows Selznock. Says the only little girl he has is a blonde who voted for Taft, and he doesn't think she would be the least bit interested in a bunny. Guess you called the turn, youngster."

Mr. Marvin flushed with pleasure.

"The Sergeant and I," continued Mr. David, "are about to do some of our very best thinking. Many times our very best thinking amounts to just nothing. But we would be very glad to have you join us."

"Yes sir," said Mr. Marvin.

"By the way," Tiny David asked Mr. Linton, "did you take a saliva test of the rabbit?"

Mr. Linton snorted his disgust.

"If you had," continued Mr. David, "our experts could tell us where the rabbit came from, and what Mr. Selznock was going to do with it. This way, we have to think. That's always hard."

Their combined thoughts had produced no outward results when the telephone-bell provided a diversion. Mr. Linton, who answered the call, found himself in conversation with Lieutenant James Crosby.

"He wants to know if you are here," said Mr. Linton.

"I am here," admitted Mr. David.

Mr. Linton imparted the information.

"He says that he will be here as soon as he can make it," explained Mr. Linton, as he hung up the receiver.

SLIGHTLY less than an hour had elapsed when Mr. Crosby was in their midst. His greetings were hasty; then he centered his fire on Mr. Linton.

"Know a kid named Pete Stevens?"

"Yes."

Mr. Crosby picked up his hat. "Let's go get him."

"Why?" demanded Mr. David.

Mr. Crosby's answer was delivered rapid-fire:

"He called the barracks. Said two men were murdered in a shack on the other end of the town. Wouldn't give his name. Max threw the call to me, and went to work. Traced the call to a pay-station in a store. We called back, and they remembered Stevens made the call. Didn't sound a general alarm, be-

cause it sounded like a phony. But I am not so sure."

By this time they were moving toward the car. Marvin hung back uncertainly, but Tiny David called to him: "It's your party, youngster. Come along."

Linton led the way to Stevens' home. A man, obviously the boy's father, answered their ring.

"Pete in?" asked Tiny David.

"Yes. He aint in no trouble, is he?"

Tiny David laughed.

"Hardly. But we will be if he doesn't help us out. We want him to show us a road through the woods. He may be gone for some time, but he isn't in any trouble."

"I'll get him," said the man.

THE boy put in a reluctant appearance, and they led him to the car, where he was seated on the rear seat between Lieutenants David and Crosby. He told his story unwillingly, but with apparent sincerity.

"I was walking through the woods on the other side of town,—I'll take you there,—when I came to a shack and heard loud talking. I crept up and peeped through a crack. Four guys was chewing the rag at each other. Two of the guys was standing at one end of the room. One of the other guys pulls out a gat and lets them have it."

He paused.

"Say, how did you guys know I made the call?"

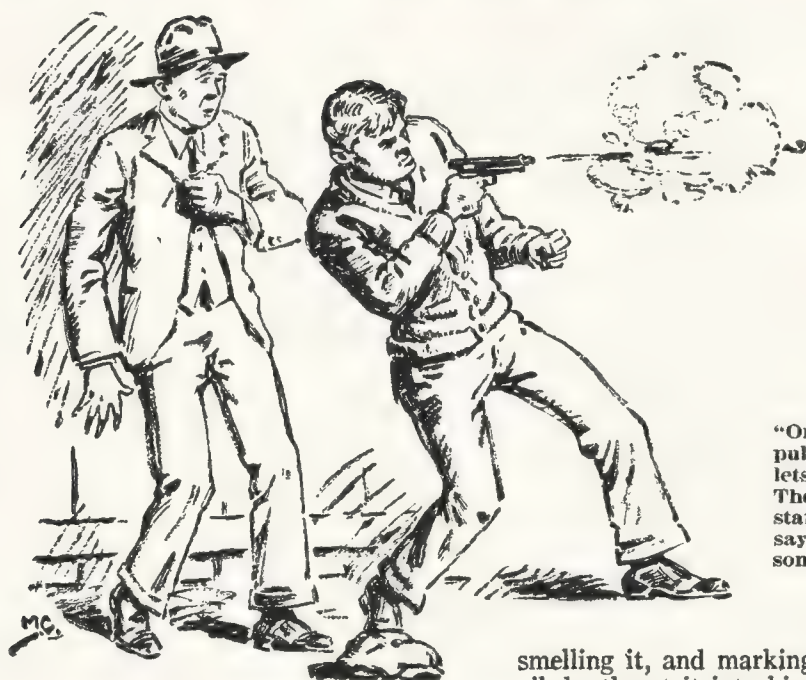
"Never mind that," said Tiny David. "Go on."

"The two guys goes down in a heap. Their faces is covered with blood, and it's a good bet they aint going to be no use to anybody from then on. The guy with the gat in his hand turns to the other guy, and says: 'That takes care of everything.' The other guy just stands there, and then he says, 'Oh, my God!' or something like that. The guy with the gat says something about them being in this together, and that it was the only way out. He makes a crack about there being a way to fix the whole thing up."

"Go on," ordered Tiny David.

"That's all I know, Lieutenant. That wasn't no place for me. I got away from there. I figured it wasn't none of my business. Then I got to thinking that you guys should ought to know about it. That was when I slipped into the booth and put in the call and—"

"Know any of the guys you saw in the cabin?" asked Tiny David.



"One of the guys pulls out a gat and lets them have it. . . . The other guy just stands there and he says, 'My God!' or something like that."

"Only one. Guy named Selznoch."

"Did he have the gun?"

"Gosh, no! He was one of the guys that got his."

"Take us there," Tiny David ordered.

They drove to the other end of the town, parked their car and made their way through dense woods until they came to a cabin. The door of the building was unlocked, and slightly ajar.

Standing in the doorway, they directed the rays from their flashlights so that the single room was illuminated. The building was untenanted.

"They're gone!" gasped the youth.

TINY DAVID pushed past him and entered the room.

"Where did the man with the gun stand?" he asked.

The youth indicated the north wall of the building.

"And where were the two guys that got shot?"

The youth pointed at the opposite side. Trooper Marvin checked an exclamation of surprise. That question hardly was necessary. There were dark stains on the floor where the youth pointed.

Tiny David ignored the stains as he dropped to his knees and began to search the floor. He gave a little grunt of pleasure as one of his groping hands encountered what appeared to be a wad of cardboard. After examining that wad,

smelling it, and marking it with a pencil, he thrust it into his pocket.

Then Tiny David turned his attention to the south side of the building at a spot beyond the dark stains. He examined the wall, beginning at the floor and working toward the ceiling. He whistled softly when the task was completed.

Pete Stevens could contain himself no longer.

"They moved 'em!" he cried.

"Looks that way," Tiny David admitted. "Smart thing to do, at that. Bad business, having bodies around loose."

"Want that I should round up a gang and start hunting in the woods? That's probably where they hid 'em."

Tiny David appeared to be giving the offer careful consideration.

"Not until morning," he ruled. "No use blundering around in the dark. They won't run away."

Mr. Crosby took part in the proceedings:

"Guess we better call the barracks, and let the experts get on the job."

"No hurry," ruled Tiny David.

Mr. Crosby sighed with resignation. "This," he announced, "is strictly your private funeral. Far be it from me to intrude on your last rites, but I would like to point out that when our very best doctors of footprintology get on the job, they are going to get lots of casts from your Number Thirteens. They won't like that. Neither will they

give any cheers when they find your thumb-marks on that bloodstained piece of paper you just crammed in your pocket."

Mr. Crosby sighed again. "There are times when you don't act quite bright. This is one of those times. Me, I want no part of it. This is a bad time to act dumb, when the outfit is all broken out with a bad attack of expertitis."

Mr. David registered pained surprise. "Hadn't counted on having any experts here. Guess I have gummed up things for them. Probably best thing to do is to fix it so we won't need them."

"That idea," said Mr. Crosby, with heavy sarcasm, "has much merit. There are no bodies, so you can get technical and take the stand no murder has taken place. Unfortunately, this lad saw two men get shot."

"Yes sir!" said the boy emphatically.

Tiny David shrugged. "No point in hanging around here," he declared.

"Where would we suggest that we put in our time?" asked Mr. Crosby.

"Well," said Mr. David, "we might take a run down to Syrport."

"Don't forget Montreal, Albany, Chicago and a lot of other places," Mr. Crosby suggested.

"They wouldn't do," declared Mr. David. "I want to call at Mr. Selznock's home."

"Mr. Selznock won't be home," said Mr. Crosby. "He happens to be dead."

"I saw him shot!" added the youth.

Mr. David thrust these contributions aside. "The least we can do is offer our condolences to the family. His passing leaves that rabbit he had fatherless, so to speak."

"You," declared Mr. Crosby, "have no use for a rabbit. You should get yourself a squirrel. Be more congenial company for you."

Mr. David considered the suggestion carefully. "A squirrel would do just as well," he declared.

"I give up," Mr. Crosby asserted.

"I am turning in my suit," added Mr. Linton.

Trooper Marvin had nothing to offer.

"Anybody want to go to Syrport?" asked Mr. David.

"Official business or pleasure?" demanded Mr. Crosby.

"That," declared Mr. David, "is a matter for your own conscience."

Trooper Marvin made a decision. "If it please the Lieutenant, may I go with him?"



Tiny David grinned.

"Right, youngster. After all, it is your rabbit."

"We will be with you," said Mr. Crosby, with heavy dignity. "We have sat through the church services, so why should we run out on the prayers at the grave?"

"How about me?" demanded Pete Stevens.

"You," said Tiny David, "have been assigned to Seat Seven in Compartment Two. Come along."

They made their way to the car, and headed south. Mr. David, behind the wheel, hummed gayly as the car rushed along.

Mr. Crosby lowered his voice: "Tiny, how do you dope this out? Is this kid screwy?"

Mr. David shook his head. "Nope. He is telling just what he saw."

Mr. Crosby gave it up. "All right," he growled. "Act mysterious. But there is no mystery about what will happen if you have gummed this up."

MR. DAVID went back to his interrupted song. It had to do with a girl, moonlight and a canoe.

Sergeant Linton, sitting on the rear seat, addressed Trooper Marvin:

"The gong is in order."

Then the car came to a halt before a gasoline station, and Tiny David stepped out.

"Fill it up," he instructed the attendant. He turned to Crosby. "You sign for it. I have some high-grade telephoning to do."

When the trip was resumed, Mr. David went back to the same song. There were groans and *sotto voce* comments. He ignored them. He had just started on the chorus again when the lights of Syrport loomed ahead.

"Anybody know where Hawley Avenue is?" he asked.

"I do, sir," said Trooper Marvin. "Syrport is my home."

He gave directions, which Tiny David followed, and soon the car was halted at the corner of the 200 block of Hawley Avenue. Three men stepped forward. Tiny David introduced them hurriedly. They were two detectives from the Syrport police, and an agent of the Secret Service.

"Think you got him?" asked the latter official.

"Yep," said Tiny David.

"Good picking," said the Secret Service agent.

THE address Selznock had given was a detached house. They stood at one side while Tiny David approached the front door and rang the bell. The street was deserted, and over it hung the quiet of early morning.

Tiny David kept his finger on the push-button. Soon the porch light was switched on. A chain rattled, and the door was opened a few inches. Behind it stood a woman in a dressing-gown.

"What do you want?" she demanded.

Tiny David hooked his foot in the opening between the door and the frame. He removed his cap.

"Does Mr. Selznock live here?"

"Who wants him?"

"I am afraid I have bad news for you. Mr. Selznock is dead. He was murdered this afternoon."

"Are you crazy?" gasped the woman.

The chain rattled again, and the door swung open. She stood revealed, and blinking in the unaccustomed light. Once, perhaps, she had been beautiful.

"Are you crazy?" she repeated.

"No, madam," said Tiny David. "Mr. Selznock was murdered this afternoon."

"Is this a gag?" Her voice was harsh and discordant. "What's the game?"

Tiny David was very patient.

"Mr. Selznock," he repeated, as if it were a recitation, "was murdered this afternoon."

"Nuts!" snapped the woman.

"No, madam," Tiny David contradicted her, "murdered."

"Murdered, hell! Joe's up in his room right now."

Tiny David nodded.

"Then somebody brought the body home. I kind of figured we would find Mr. Selznock here."

"Body?" She made a whip of the word. "He came home under his own power, and he et enough dinner for two men."

She saw the other men in the shadows and tried heavy diplomacy.

"What's the gag? Have you boys been had? There aint nothing the matter with Joe."

Tiny David shook his head in bewilderment. "Then Mr. Selznock hasn't been murdered?"

She laughed heartily. "Not so you could notice it. Sorry you boys got the run-around."

"Guess there has been a mistake," Tiny David admitted; "but if Mr. Selznock wasn't murdered, the man with him this afternoon surely was."

The woman laughed again.

"Mike Scarnotti? Say, he was here to dinner, and he et as much as Joe. You never seen two healthier-looking corpses. But this aint getting Dottie her beauty sleep. Good night, boys."

Tiny David pushed by her.

"What—" she began.

His huge hand covered her mouth.

"Keep quiet," he ordered. "I still believe Selznock was murdered. Got to have a look at him. Come on, gang."

HIS fellow-troopers followed to a room at the front of the second floor. Tiny David, flashlight in hand, entered, and threw a light switch. The man in the bed sat up with a start, blinking his eyes.

"What the—"

"That," said Sergeant Linton, in a conversational tone, "is Mr. Selznock."

"That's the guy," screamed Pete Stevens, "and he was murdered! I seen him murdered! He was blood all over his face!"

Selznock started to get up.

"Get back on that bed!" ordered Tiny David. He stepped forward, explored the bed-clothing with his fingers, and found no weapon. Then he pulled a chair close to the bed and sat down.

Selznock watched him warily, waiting for the enemy to make the first move.

Tiny David was silent. He made an elaborate process of lighting a cigarette. Selznoch could stand it no longer.

"What's it all about?" he demanded.

"A rabbit," said Tiny David.

"Are you crazy?" Selznoch demanded harshly.

Tiny David ignored the question. He flicked the ashes from his cigarette.

"Don't get ashes on them rugs," ordered Selznoch.

"What do you care?" retorted Tiny David. "You won't be using them—long."

"Says you!"

Tiny David grinned. "Says I. And I'll say some more. I'll tell you a little story."

"I aint craving no bedtime stories."

Tiny David chuckled. "This is a bedtime story. And you are going to listen to it."

He settled himself more comfortably, and began:

"Once upon a time there were two gents we will call *A* and *B*. They went to a gent named *C*, who had never seen them before, and put a proposition up to him about like this:

"'You are making a lot of money, and we want some of it. If we don't get it, it will be just too bad for you. And if you tell anybody about this visit, the same thing applies.'

"After that, they named the amount they wanted. *C* probably said he couldn't raise that much. *A* and *B* gave him a certain length of time to think it over. Then they left, first warning him again what would happen to him if he talked, and telling him they would be back.

"A short time after that *C* met an acquaintance we will call *D*. *D* asked *C* how he was feeling. *C* asked *D* the same question. Then *D* grew confidential, and said he was worried to death because two guys were putting the screws

on some relative of his and wanted a lot of money as a shakedown.

"That, of course, excited *C*, who said he was up against the same racket, and after they had exchanged a few facts, they decided they were both dealing with the same gents.

"Then *D* got more confidential. He told *C* he was dickering with the gang on behalf of his relative, and that he thought he could either scare them off entirely or get them to cut the price considerably. That was enough for *C*. He begged *D* to do what he could for him, too; and after bickering a little, *D* promised to do what he could.

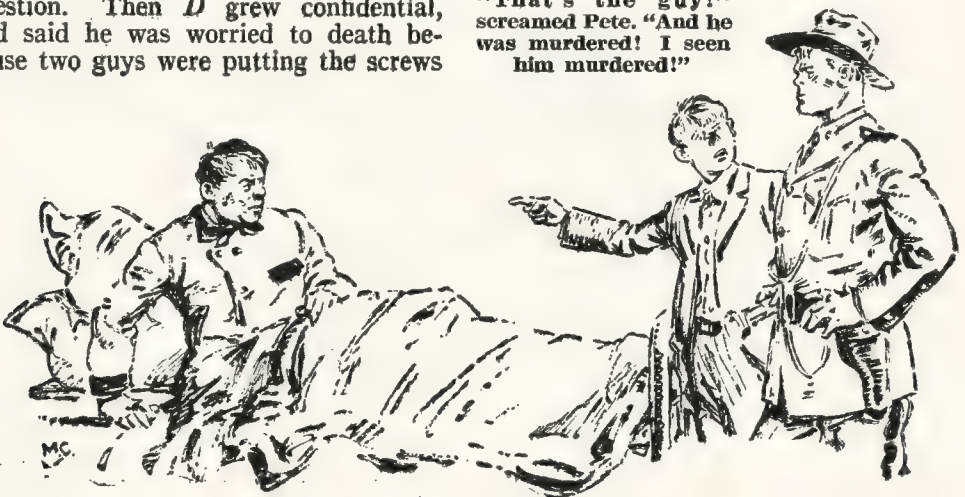
"The next move was when *D* told *C* he had arranged a meeting with the gang. He told *C* he better come along, and *C* agreed. Before they started, *D* asked *C* if he had a gun. *C* said he didn't. *D* told him *A* and *B* were tough babies, and gave *C* a gun.

"*D* and *C* drove to a shack on the outskirts of Tranquil Lake, where they met *A* and *B*. *D* did the talking. There was an argument. *A* and *B* made threats. *D* drew a gun and let them have it.

"*A* and *B* went down, and when *C* could bring himself to look, their faces were covered with blood, and they looked very dead. *C* wasn't the only person who got that idea. Somebody who had been peeking in, and who heard every word, thought the same thing. It was at least fairly well staged.

"Then *C* and *D* had it out. *D* pointed out that it was the only way, and that *C* was as guilty as he was. *C* was panic-stricken. Then *D* pointed out that there was a way out of the mess. He said that he had a friend near by, probably a farmer, who would dispose of the bod-

"That's the guy!" screamed Pete. "And he was murdered! I seen him murdered!"



ies for them, and nobody would be the wiser.

"D took C to this friend. We will call him E. E heard the proposition and raised objections. Probably he said it was too dangerous. Then D asked him whether he wouldn't do it if he was well paid. They argued some more, and at last E agreed to accept a certain price, and a good stiff one.

"Then C and D went into conference. D said he would put up half of the money. C, still in a panic, agreed to raise the other half. Then they went to their several banks and collected the money. They paid it over to E. C went home, scared half to death, and still believing he had been a party to a murder. It was a cinch he wouldn't do any talking.

"In the next scene A, B, D and E meet. They put aside the half of the money paid to E by D. That was bait. They divide the half paid by C four ways. That's profit."

TINY DAVID paused to light a cigarette.

"Almost clear profit," he continued. "The only items of overhead were a little time, a little gasoline and a little rabbit."

He removed a piece of bloodstained paper from his pocket.

"The experts will have a field day with that tomorrow, or today, rather. But when they get all through, I am betting they will find that blood came from a rabbit. You needed a lot to make the show convincing, and a rabbit was the answer."

Tiny David fished in his pocket again, and produced a wad of cardboard.

"That slug came from a blank cartridge. That was one mistake. The room was so small the shots had to be almost at the point of contact. There were no bullet-holes in the wall, and no bullets on the floor. That was the second mistake. But the rabbit was the big mistake."

He chuckled softly.

"Even a rookie knew you two mugs weren't in character lugging a rabbit around. We looked you up, and found you were suspected of being connected with the extortion racket. That was when the pieces began to fit the border of the puzzle. A pal of mine in New York worked a case just like this, only they used a chicken to get the blood. I

thought of that right away, and asked: 'Why not a rabbit?'"

His chuckle was louder.

"Of course, we had a bit of luck. A pal of ours happened to stumble in on the fake murder. That brought us on the job sooner than we would have got there under normal conditions. All of which goes to prove, you never know your luck."

He produced pencil and paper.

"Now all we have to do is fill in the names for the letters. A, of course, is you, Joseph Selznock, in person. B is your pal Mike Scarnotti—name furnished by courtesy of the blonde vision."

He looked up from the paper.

"I'll put all my cards on the table. I'll have to call on you for C, D and E."

"I'll see you in hell first!" roared Joseph Selznock.

"Possibly," Tiny David admitted. He was unsmiling. His fists were clenched. His voice was a growl. "We can round up the rest of the cast, but it will take time and a lot of chasing around. I hate to do any unnecessary chasing around."

He sighed.

"I can't make you any promises, and I certainly won't threaten you. All I can tell you is that if I have to do that chasing around I will be awful mad. If I don't have to, I won't be mad. You are going to have a lot of business to transact with me. You can figure it out whether you want me mad or not."

Selznock's face, the color of putty, stood out against the white pillow.

"Gimme the paper," he ordered.

HE filled in names opposite the letters Tiny David had written there.

"Better put down the addresses," the big trooper instructed him. "It might make me mad if I had trouble locating them."

He inspected the finished list.

"Probably should have added more letters for other guys who fit in the picture somewhere. Well, that can come later. But if any of these are phony, I sure will be mad."

He turned to Trooper Marvin.

"Nice going, youngster. When you get back to that cabin, hunt up that rabbit, cut off its left hind foot, and keep it with you as long as you are in this outfit. You'll need it."

He grinned.

"But if you lose it, don't worry. You have a head, my lad."

Another highly interesting story by Robert R. Mill will appear in an early issue.

One Against A Wilderness

By WILLIAM
CHESTER

Illustrated by
Jeremy Cannon

BONES tell the story of newfound Arctic Nato'wa: You find them everywhere, all bare and clean and polished—the carrion birds attend to that. Some are the bones of mighty brutes that roamed Nato'wa's forests not long since—great bears, fierce long-haired tigers of an Arctic breed, lithe climbing cats and other brutes both familiar and strange—the fauna of another age.

Those who seek will also find the bones of men—many of them. Some show the marks of savage fangs, but even more will bear the marks of other hostile men, the crushing fracture of a war-club, the jagged perforation of the tomahawk, the clean-cut puncture of a throwing-spear, with oftentimes a flinten arrowhead wedged intact, in the bone.

By these signs one may know that in Nato'wa, as elsewhere on this earth, man is man's own worst enemy. And on a cliff which overlooks Nato'wa's inner reefs, there is another grim reminder of man's hostility to man: it is a row of human skulls. Each one stares blankly toward the sea; each one was placed there by some superstitious savage from the



VI — "The Turn of
the Tide"



nearer inland river-villages of the Shoni tribe, to pacify the unknown dead.

Along this cliff in mournful caucus each day the black-winged purifiers of the forest gather by the hundreds. Each hour sees the vultures come and go upon their endless quest, to keep the wilderness clean of carrion.

Along this cliff one day a lesser meat-bird perched upon a skull. He eyed it with a sharp appraising glance, then settled back indifferently to preen and sleep in the sun. But H'ka the buzzard had hardly closed his eyes when from a distance, hurtling through the air, another skull came flying. With a mighty *clack* it struck H'ka's grim perch from under him, and bowled a dozen others rattling down the cliffs.

H'ka rose upon beating wings, profane and full of indignation. And from the ledge not far above, three grinning faces looked down upon H'ka's discomfiture: One was a bear's face, sly eyes agleam, white teeth exposed from ear to ear, red tongue lolling heavily. A second was the fierce mask of a cougar, the ears back-laid, only the gleaming canines exposed below a wrinkled lip. And in between these well-armed faces of the forest was another, hickory-brown, equipped with even rows of snow-white teeth. Through them came no bestial snarl, but boyish laughter, spontaneous and clear.

Hopeka-town—inland and still not fully re-palisaded since the flood which had leveled it—boasted many promising

future warriors, but none among the village youths was so lithely muscular as he who strode between the cougar and the bear, like them a creature of the forest, full of swift abounding strength.

"*Ha-ho!*" he laughed, and spoke aloud to his savage companions. "Who but Kioga could hurl a skull like that? I knocked the skull from under H'ka at thirty paces. But look you—there is one at sixty!" With outstretched arm Kioga indicated the pale gray mark along the cliffs. "Now see this arrow—round in the head, to stun great birds. This one and twenty more I made in half a morning. 'Twould take the finest fletcher in Hopeka-town five times as long. But there again I am superior. For I have tools—ah, cunning tools, keen-edged and made by men who know great magic. They are my father's race. They live, these white-skinned men, where the sun goes to rest in winter. Of our land Nato'wa they know nothing, or they would come and take it from the Shoni warriors. But watch—the arrow flies!"

He took up his bow and drew the string to jaw, glanced down the shaft and raised his aim for distance. Then—*thrum-m-m*—the bow-cord hummed. The shaft shot forth, flew straight for an instant, then curved and, like steel to magnet drawn, it hit the mark resoundingly.

This time there was no bony *clack*. Instead a dull and telltale thump issued from the skull. Two claw-like bony hands flew up in air, then disappeared.

KIOGA gasped. "It was a man! Come Mika, Aki—after me! I know of but one skull among the living Shoni so bare of hair as that!"

Another instant later found Kioga reaching down to grasp the wrist of one who desperately clutched a jutting spur of rock at the cliff's edge. A moment more, and he lay sprawled upon the rock. The Snow Hawk conned him closely.

"K'yopit, as I thought! *Ai*, his eyes are closed. I've killed him with my bird-bolt. But no—he opens one. Ah, he is dazed, no more. Well for thee, K'yopit my sly friend, I did not use a pointed shaft! Wake up! Awake, my wrinkled hypocrite! How things have changed. Once K'yopit thought to make Kioga his slave. And now,"—with a quick movement the youth slipped a thong about the other's wrists—"now I am the master of a shaman, and a very clever one."

"My head! My head!" The captive's groaning voice came full of pathos through his toothless thin-lipped jaws. One eye, wide open, belied his attitude of unconsciousness. It scanned Kioga with a swift and cunning glance. Then suddenly it glimpsed those other two, and feigning death, K'yopit stiffened out again in terror.

"Come, come, K'yopit!" the Snow Hawk cried impatiently. "Awake! These are my creatures; there is naught to fear. What do you here among the Men-of-Long-Ago?"

K'yopit opened up his eyes again, and taking courage, rose to a squatting position, froglike. "My luck was bad. I brought a skull to place upon the pile," he lisped. "For thus bad luck is often cured."

"Ho, K'yopit, long moons have passed since you sought to steal me for your slave."

"Bear me no ill will for that," the other whined. "An old man am I, in dire need of one to break my wood and bring me food."

"You came from far?" pursued the Snow Hawk, guilelessly.

"On foot from distant Magua. They threw me from the village bodily. I am an outcast now, without a place to lay my head."

"You wring my heart," the Snow Hawk answered, unimpressed. "But tell me, what did you do to anger them?"

"Eh—er," said K'yopit with a shrewd glance at the youth. "He is no fool, this handsome boy from Hopeka! . . . I threw the plum-stones with the warriors. The game went on all night. It came to pass, when morning dawned, that each warrior owed me skins he did not have. They were a sorry sight, without a feather to their names, confounded by my skill!" He cocked a knowing eye on Kioga. "Wouldst care to play awhile?"

THE SNOW HAWK raised a negative hand hastily. "Not I, thou smiling cheat! But look you, shaman: There is another game that I would play."

"Ah, games! You talk my dialect, my son," the shaman answered eagerly. "What have you in your mind?"

"We both are outcasts—" began Kioga.

In surprise the shaman interrupted:

"An outcast, *you*? Who saved the people of Hopeka from Metinga's flooding waters?"

"Even so. The memories of men are short. And you too, so you said."



"Indeed! Segoya threatened to wear my ears about his neck if I returned to claim my gaming debts."

"Well, then, we both wish to regain grace among the Shoni. What would you give me if I showed you how this might be done?"

K'yopit looked uneasy at this talk of giving, then brightened. "My magic secrets I'll reveal to you," he answered slyly.

"Ah, bah! Come, shaman, I know all those little tricks, and more besides. What will you give—of value?"

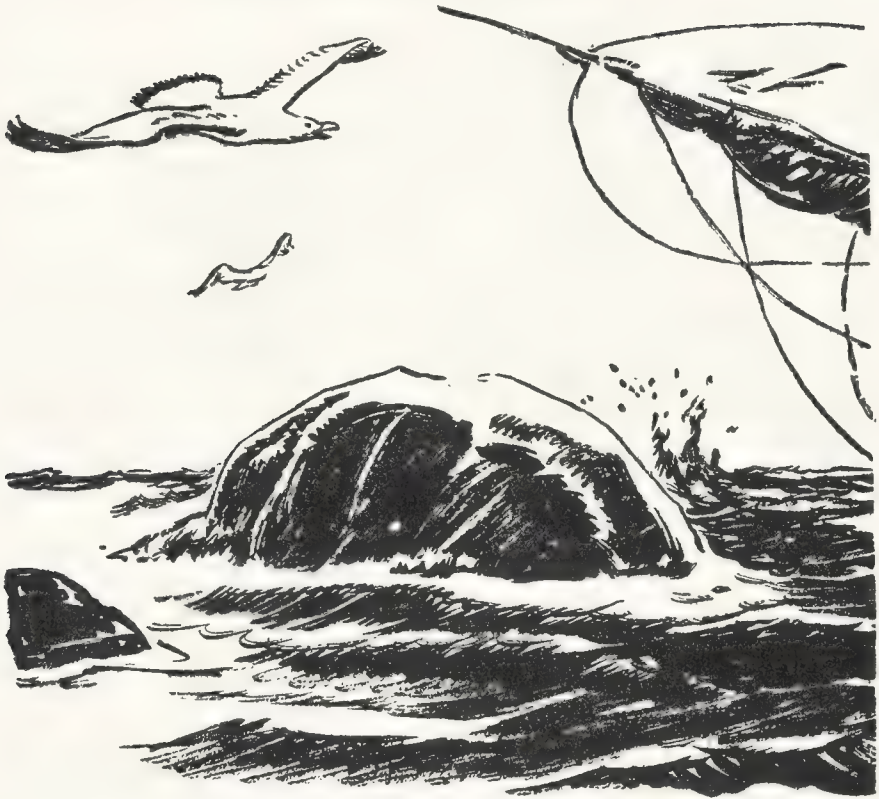
K'yopit's face counterfeited injured feelings. But when Kioga calmly ignored it, craft took its place. "The half of fifty skins, which I have hidden near by. What's in your mind, my subtle youth?"

"Come walk with us and see." Kioga rose; the shaman too. But old K'yopit shrank back from the panting jaws of Aki and the cougar Mika.

"Come, come!" cried Kioga. "You are too brave to fear my harmless ones. Shrink not. But if you think to do me any evil, depend upon it, Aki will smell the act beforehand, and rip you open like a water-bag."

"I do thee evil?" whined K'yopit indignantly. "*Ai-i!* I love thee like an only son. But what is it, thou wouldst speak about? Come quickly to the point."

"Each step draws us nearer," said Kioga, probing the thickets near the seashore with his quick keen eyes. "Ah, we



are here!" Drawing aside a thorny bush, he revealed a heap of wreckage covered by the forest vines. For as with bones of brutes and men, Nato'wa gives final harborage to cadavers of ships as well, which drift by chance where men would never intentionally sail them. Here lay the ruin of a little single-masted ship, a great hole stove in the decking, toward which the Snow Hawk pointed, ordering: "Enter."

K'YOPIT obeyed, a little fearfully, for never before had he seen the like of this, to him, vast vessel. Kioga followed, as one to whom the way was most familiar, the two brutes crouching at the exit watchfully. Darkness reigned within, but with his fire-sticks, Kioga kindled light, by which the wrinkled shaman saw the strange interior and looked about, wide-eyed.

"Fear not," Kioga reassured him. "Oft have I hidden here of late, when foes pursued me, since first I found this great canoe. My father came here in it from the land of white-skins."

"A race of white-skins? Bah, that I cannot believe."

"Scoff not. Here is their work. Now look you, K'yopit: we both are outcasts, 'tis agreed. And think of this: Hopeka's

broken walls are rising slowly. The war-men are away. You may have heard that the Wa-Kanek scalp-hunters are on the march. Another day or two will find them near Hopeka. Many of our tribesmen will be killed without a wall to fight behind."

"Yes, yes," K'yopit muttered. "But what of that?"

"We'll show them how to raise the wall more quickly; and how to make their weapons in a quarter of the time; and how to make their thin canoes great enough to sail upon the ocean; and how to build their lodges stronger than the strongest winds. Then once again we will be welcome among our people, and men will cheer our names."

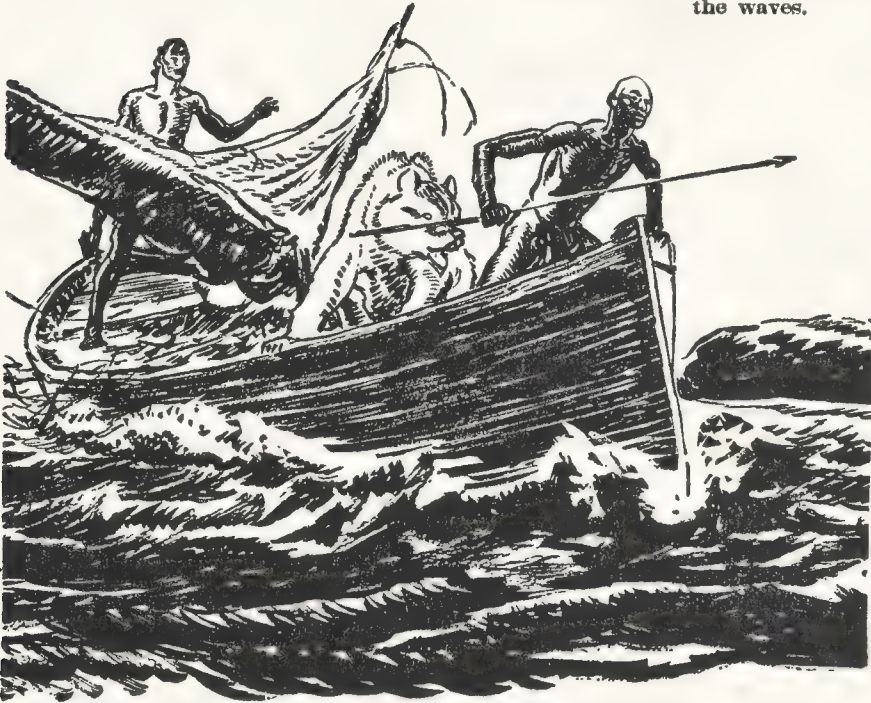
"Great talk! Great talk!" K'yopit answered doubtfully. "But how may such things be done?"

"We'll bring them white men's knowledge. We'll bring them *tools*, the like of which the Shoni never knew before, which I have found and learned to use these past weeks near this hulk."

"Tools," K'yopit rolled the foreign word upon an unaccustomed tongue. "What may '*tools*' be?"

"Tools are the implements with which my race—the white men—have conquered half the world." Then selecting

A rope let go. The sail flapped forward.
The mast bent . . . dropped into the sea.
The craft yawed, rocking at the mercy of
the waves.



a piece of wood: "Here is a good thick branch. Divide it into two," he said.

K'yopit took it up and thought, then held the wood across the fire, charring the center, scraping away the char and burning it again. Slowly and laboriously he thus set to work to divide the wood in two.

THE SNOW HAWK smiled superiorly, and reached into a chest, drawing forth a rusty but serviceable saw. In five strokes he achieved what K'yopit would have needed an hour to accomplish.

Narrowed grew the eyes of old K'yopit. "Eh-eh, a strange thing, this! How easily all the palisade logs could be cut."

"Here is another piece, a good spear's length. Could you make it smooth?"

K'yopit looked about him, found a small sharp stone and diligently scraped. But Kioga drew forth a plane and with swift and easy movements, made the square billet round, shaped on a point, hardened it in the fire and hurled it against the half-decayed wooden wall, where it struck and quivered. This was the work of but a few minutes.

"Eh-eh," muttered old K'yopit, more and more impressed. "Smooth as a maiden's skin—in such a little while!"

"*Ai!*" the Snow Hawk answered, throwing light about the dim interior. "And now behold the other things that I have made with white men's tools, and tell me if the Shoni tribes would not give all they own to know my secret."

K'yopit glanced about, and saw boxes with hinged tops, and graceful clubs, and miniature canoes, and paddles long and broadly bladed, all of a finish unknown to the primitive workmen of the Shoni tribes.

"*Ai-yah!*" exclaimed K'yopit. "You're right. For this the Shoni folk would give their all."

"Even so," said Kioga. "Now, then, you shall precede me to the village. Tell Saki of the mighty voice, and she will cry the tidings through the village."

"'Tis good. I go this very hour," K'yopit answered, by now enthusiastic. Then, on another note: "But how shall I win favor—who return with nothing?"

"Thy magic caused these things to be—out of thin air," Kioga explained with a knowing glance. "Thine is the magic power. I am but the wielder of the tools. You understand? And thus we both win honors."

K'yopit cackled shrilly. "I understand, O cunning one! I go to tell them you are coming."

OUTCAST, and dweller for long among the forest brutes, the Snow Hawk craved the companionship of his human kind. Eager as well to bring enlightenment to his savage adopted people, he trod the forest trails light-footed and with even lighter heart. And when he neared Hopeka, with his tools wrapped in a skin bag, he found the ground had been well prepared: Apprised of something strange to come, the people, robed in furs and feather mantles, assembled near the village gate. Foremost among them, in positions of advantage, stood several of the tribal shamans, jealous of their own reputations as makers of magic, yet consumed by curiosity.

The Snow Hawk neared, bold on the face of him, yet every nerve alert to fly at need. But though his enemies had not forgot their rancor, it smoldered now inactively, replaced by the burning curiosity of their savage natures. No hand was raised against him when he entered. Instead the shamans made a path, through which he went, his bag of tools in hand, and sat before the silent seated council, among whom squatted old K'yopit.

When all had gathered, Semasi uprose and addressed Kioga:

"He of the fleshless limbs spoke of great benefits to all our people which you would bring—of stronger walls, raised more swiftly than our workers now may raise them. Speak, then, and show your magic to the council. And if it be as great as old K'yopit promised, mayhap the chiefs will honor both of you."

K'yopit rubbed his skinny hands in anticipation. Kioga opened up the bag and laid the tools before him.

"Now bring me logs, and I will show you how they may be cut the quicker, that the walls of Hopeka-town will rise before an enemy arrives."

And when the logs were brought, he cut them swiftly through—as many logs in half an hour as several men could burn through in a day, working the ancient way. Then other tools he showed them. The people watched in fascination, all save the circle of the envious shamans, resentful of the stir that Kioga caused.

"A fraud!" cried one, determined that Kioga should receive no credit. And others quickly joined their voices in the condemnation.

This much Kioga knew, from long experience: the village folk—those lesser ones remaining while the warriors were

absent—dared not deny the statements of the influential shamans. He noted more—the stealthy closing of the ring of shamans round about him, and the fingering of weapons. His quick glance sought K'yopit, found him sneaking through the village gate, his hopes of gaining favor gone glimmering.

Without an instant's hesitation Kioga tossed his bag of tools beyond the wall, left behind what remained, and with a lightning and unexpected bound knocked down the nearest robe-wrapped shaman, swung up atop a ledge and thence, cat-like, upon the towering eastern palisade, the only one erected. A knife chugged sharply just between his clutching hands, and yells behind foretold pursuit. But when it came, Kioga had snatched up his bag of tools and gone.

HE heard the din die down behind and slackened his pace, then turned to slip along the river. And presently he saw ahead the withered form of old K'yopit, fleeing as if pursued by devils. The Snow Hawk hailed him. K'yopit only scurried on the faster. But Kioga easily came up with him and seized him by the nape.

"Why do you run? 'Tis I, Kioga. *Ai-i*, you are a fearful one!"

"Fearful?" quavered K'yopit. "Fearful—I? Not so—I ran but to lend thee aid, my son."

"But you ran away from the village."

"Eh, well, no matter," returned K'yopit, with returning self-possession. "We are safe again. Do not complain. What now?"

"What now—I do not know," Kioga answered thoughtfully, much hurt by the failure of his plans. "We still are outcasts. The Shoni do not want us. What say you, K'yopit, if we go away and never return?"

"A fine idea—but whither?" demanded the practical old trader.

"Beyond the reefs, beyond the southern horizon, to the place where the holy sun goes every winter."

K'yopit sought to hide a shiver. "Eh—not that I am afraid, but—the waters of the sea are cold, and I am not the mighty swimmer I used to be."

"There will not be the need to swim. With these my tools, I'll build a great canoe. White men cause the wind to labor, pushing on a great wing called a sail. And on their ships they have a tail to steer by, like a fish. I'll make my ship as white men do. Then we will sail it out to sea and nevermore return among

the Shoni, who hate us. When we have gone, they'll wonder what became of us."

"But men have never gone among those mighty waves before." K'yopit added, fearfully: "Hark—we near the cliffs above the sea. Hear how the great waves roar and beat against the rocks! No craft could live out there."

"The craft that I will build will laugh at danger. Come, friend K'yopit, had you rather be burnt by the Shoni at the stake?"

"Burn or drown or feed the belly of a shark, I see no difference. A man is dead, no matter how he dies. I'll go—do anything you say."

"That is well," quoth Kioga, turning back. "But look you, it will cost you dearly."

"How's that—eh-eh?" demanded wary K'yopit, once more the miser of Magua.

"For sail we need a score of fine white skins, all sewn together."

"A score of skins," K'yopit wailed. "'Tis all I own, my son!"

"What of the skins you promised me, then? What of the skins you won in throwing plum-stones?"

"*Ai*, he never forgets a word," complained K'yopit. "But if I must, I must. But only ten skins will I give."

"So long as they are big, mayhap they'll do. Come, let us go and fetch them."

PERFORCE, though still unwilling, K'yopit led the way to a cave along the cliffs, and from their hiding-place removed a bale of well-cured skins. From these, with his sharp knife, Kioga next day cut long leather thongs, pierced holes, and with the thongs sewed all the skins together.

"'Tis not a very handsome sail, but it will do. Come now, and let us get to work. The hardest part still remains."

Then began the fabricating of Kioga's ship. Along the shore the Snow Hawk found the driftwood that he sought, and laboriously fashioned a keel. A sapling, cut and trimmed, would serve for mast. But though he labored until the sweat ran from his pores, the work proceeded slowly. And when some time had passed, Kioga looked doubtfully at a sorry-looking skeleton, the least part of his ship-to-be.

He had the tools which he had found, and not a little acquired skill in their use. Possibly a month would have seen completion of his plans. But time was of the essence, for winter neared: the work

did not progress with speed enough; and doddering, misanthropic K'yopit proved more a hindrance than a help, commenting: "Methinks 'twould leak before we reached the nearest reef. We cannot go to sea in that."

"K'yopit, you are right," the Snow Hawk answered with a frown. "Had I not left behind my other tools—but wait, I know a better way. Last night it stormed, and after every storm the sea gives up some driftwood and wreckage. We'll hunt along the shore and see what may be found."

TWO days they hunted vainly. But on the third their search was well rewarded. Lying between two rocks in a tidal pool, the relic of a little battered single-masted craft—a whaleboat perhaps—was listing, the water spouting from her open seams. When she had emptied, Kioga set to work. The cracks he calked with pitch and grass; the larger holes repaired with splints of wood. The deck he found in fairly good repair, but to be safe, he reinforced it from within.

And when the waters rose again and filled the tidal pool, Kioga did a dance upon the rickety deck, and shouted down to old K'yopit: "Behold—it floats! It floats!"

Scarce had the words come from his lips, when the vessel wearily settled under him; and on the shore K'yopit shook his head pessimistically.

"No matter," the Snow Hawk said, immensely encouraged by the momentary triumph. "The next time it will stay afloat. Be cheerful, K'yopit—we will yet leave all our foes behind."

"And sail over the earth's edge to destruction!"

"Ah, bah!" Kioga answered, out of patience altogether. "The earth is round, not flat as you would make it. We're going to America, my father's land. When the Shoni come to look for us, we shall be gone, never to return."

AS Kioga had promised, he soon performed. When once again the tide came in, the creaky vessel floated and stayed afloat. With lengths of braided rawhide, Kioga moored it to a rock.

"Now food is what we need—good meat to last us many weeks, and great skins filled with water, that we may not thirst upon our voyage. Do you wait here, K'yopit, while I and Mika hunt a deer. Then you shall cure its meat in smoke while I fetch other things."

The Snow Hawk touched the lithe lean cat upon the head and made a little sound. At once the puma bounded up, quivering in every muscle. The two together started up the cliffs and passed into the forest.

THEY went not very far before Kioga sniffed the air and said a word; whereat the puma flattened, then slunk through the underbrush, toward a high-crowned stag in view in a ravine. Soon, with a snort, the kingly quarry raised his armored head, beheld the creeping death and sprang away along the forest trail—toward Kioga crouched upon a ledge beneath which the deer must rush in charging from the *cul-de-sac*.

Kioga heard its pounding hoofs, beheld its white-rimmed eyes. Then as it fled below, the Snow Hawk pounced, bright blade a gleam. One hand closed around an antler's base. The other fell, the sharp flint piercing deep. Down came the stag, its short race run.

Panting with his efforts, Kioga disemboweled the animal, reserving the liver for snarling Mika, but not immediately tossing the cat its share. Skinning his stag, Kioga wrapped the best parts in the skin, heaved it upon his back and staggering beneath the load, delivered it before K'yopit, who started in surprise. "A kill—so soon?"

"Good meat aplenty. Now to get Mika on our ship. Come, Silver One!"—extending in a hand the puma's share of meat, till now withheld. Eager for the feast, but wary of setting foot upon the ship, at last Mika weakened, leaping gingerly upon the deck. Vast Aki, at the sight of the puma eating, soon followed suit, less fearful of the movement underfoot for having ridden often in Kioga's canoe in cubhood days.

"Now," said the Snow Hawk. "Mayhap the river-traders will wish to give us a basket of acorn-meal. Weapons too, we'll need."

This time he set forth alone, to rearrange the ownership of food and weapons. At the mouth of a narrow rivulet he watched for signs of those who daily ferried food and skins between the several river villages. A great canoe soon came, gunwale-deep with articles of trade and tribute. Unhappily, two convoy craft accompanied it, filled with seven warriors each: some strategy beyond a simple seizure must be employed to gain one of those bursting baskets filled with food. He glimpsed the foremost paddler and

knew him and the others for a member of the shaman secret brotherhood who long had persecuted him, and this made him the more eager to discomfit them. A little while he trailed the craft, until the paddlers nosed their canoes inshore to take advantage of the slightly calmer water there.

Their speed grew little swifter for the change. Their full attention was devoted to their work. And on the bank, quick wits made instant capital of the circumstances. Along a supple leafy branch Kioga crept. The convoy-craft inched tortoiselike beneath him. The trade-canoe, in tow, came slowly near.

Kioga eyed a bulging basket near the after thwart, filled, he knew, with acorn-meal. He saw good weapons, laid aside in favor of the paddles. The craft was now beneath him, the sweating paddlers moving upstream. The fourth man passed. Kioga waited, gathering his muscles. The fifth showed a bronzed and gleaming back. Now!

Stonelike, Kioga dropped from branch upon canoe, hurled overboard the basket and seized four wooden spears. Then ere the paddlers, glancing back, could comprehend the sudden visitation which all but swamped the canoe, Kioga dived headlong overboard.

He rose beside the floating basket, and buoyed by it, drifted out of danger on the hurrying currents. Upriver, the paddlers dared not diminish their labors lest the eddies dash them and their valuable cargo upon the rocks.

With their threatful imprecations in his ears Kioga reached the shore, took up the spears and baskets, and headed for the coast again. He did not note the quiet dropping of fine grains of acorn-meal behind him as he went.

AS Kioga went seacoastward, he thought constantly of the voyage just ahead, the great adventure to the Outer World. His burden seemed to lighten with the anticipation; and when he reached the place of skulls on the cliff above the sea, it was as if he walked on air. He had turned to follow down the trail, picking his way between the skulls, when suddenly a flight of whining shafts flew past his ears. An arrow nicked him in the arm; another pierced the basket at his back.

Then from behind, a yell of triumph rose; and wheeling to look back, he saw the figures of the canoe-men approaching on the run. He dropped the basket, con-



"Quick!" cried the Snow Hawk. "The waters of the sea are coming! Make haste."

scious now of what had happened, a trickle of white meal still coming from the basket, telling its own tale.

The weapons he bore were bound with a thong. He reached for a stone with which to check the rush of his pursuers. His hand fell on a skull. He picked it up and hurled. Straight and true it soared, and bounded from the head of Tamako, who tottered back. Then like a flash Kioga hurled another, and others still, as fast as ever he could throw.

The superstitious red men drew back in horror as the grisly missiles fell among them. And picking up his bundle of

weapons Kioga dropped swiftly down the ledges, agile as a leopard, to the shore.

Running now at greyhound speed, the Snow Hawk glimpsed K'yopit on their ship, quivering with fear. "The rope—throw off the rope!" Kioga cried; and sensing his intent, the shaman hastily obeyed. The little craft floated free. Kioga flung the weaponry aboard and leaped after it.

Like lightning now he hauled the ropes to raise the clumsy hide sail. The thin mast creaked, but up the awkward contraption rose. The wind was off the shore and filled it slowly. The boom

swung out; the ship began to lean and cut the water.

Ashore, the Indians were checked at the water-line, deterred by one whose tall black dorsal fin curved lazily across the tidal pool. Their arching arrows fell just short of the receding vessel, and K'yopit shrilled a high cracked jeer. At the sound, a thrill rippled up Kioga's spine. The dreamed-of voyage to the Outer World was now begun!

MIST hid the shore. Kioga seized the tiller. Forward, Aki glowered toward the sea. Mika paced the deck aft restlessly. K'yopit stared down overside, shrank back, then stared again. Presently the Snow Hawk saw the reason:

Six long black stream-lined forms accompanied them toward the south—wolves of the deep: great orca, blood-thirsty pirates of the teeming Nato'wan waters, who attack and kill the greatest of the sea's leviathans.

"Eh-eh!" the trader quavered, trembling as with ague, and green about the lips and ears. "Not that I am afraid, but—*e-yah*, I like not the looks of these who go with us! Perhaps it would be better if we turn and go ashore again."

"Ashore!" exclaimed Kioga. "I know not even where it lies. The mists grow thick. 'Twere better that you go below. No good will come of telling them you fear them."

Glad to desert his place, K'yopit shuffled out of sight, leaving the Snow Hawk to struggle alone with unforeseen problems of simple navigation. For when he put his helm hard over, in steering round a dangerous rock, the wind seized strongly on his heavy sail and heeled the small ship over on a second course, oftentimes more perilous than the first. And as the boom swung back and forth, he must dodge it constantly.

In spite of this, the little craft made headway from the land, though more than once the jagged rocks ground harshly on her barnacled hull. By now the offshore wind blew much more strongly. Kioga's sail was bulging, full of it. The sapling mast creaked in its fittings. Close astern, a white wake bubbled loudly, and in the taut-drawn cordage the wind made wild deep-humming music.

The Snow Hawk yelled for joy. "Tomorrow we will reach America, my father's land," he told the tiller-arm, ignorance his buckler against all doubt.

As if an answer to his voice, one of the orca breached to blow, and sprayed the

deck with salty foam. And then, without the slightest warning, a rope let go. The sail flagged forward. The mast bent, buckled near the deck, then dropped into the sea.

With headway lost, the craft yawed, rocking at the mercy of the waves, which showed no mercy but beat down heavily against the shaky craft. A scarf of milky foam boiled up above the forward rail. A long green sea next raked the little pitching ship from end to end. Great Aki wrapped both mighty arms about the mast-stump and clung. Mika, snarling like a grinding mill, crouched low, be-draggled by the flying spume.

Wrestling with the tiller, now gone wild, Kioga thought of poor K'yopit, huddled fearfully below, when suddenly the trader's long hairless head appeared above the deck. And instead of fear Kioga saw, with quick surprise, a changed K'yopit: The trembling gait was gone. The wind-blown white crest of a wave slapped the old fellow to his knees, but he rose, undaunted and shouted out defiantly the semblance of a war-cry.

"*Hai-yah!* Do not turn back—sail on!"

"I would," Kioga answered, "but that the mast has fallen."

"Ah, bah! 'Tis nothing!" K'yopit wheezed impatiently; and when an orca rose again to blow, he seized a spear and hurled it with the vigor of a man of thirty. When the spear struck true, he danced triumphantly. "Sail on!"

"What happened you?" Kioga cried.

"I am a match for any man, ten men—*ehi*, for twenty!" K'yopit shouted, pounding on his bony widened chest.

"Then use your strength. Here is a spear. A moment more, and we'll be on the rocks. Push hard, K'yopit, if you'd live to see the white man's country!"

K'YOPIT did as bidden. And as he grasped the spear, a round and shiny object fell from underneath his tattered robe, and crashed to fragments on the deck. A brownish liquid trickled from the pieces.

"What's that?" Kioga called, above the roaring of the waves. "It has a mighty smell."

"I found it down below and drank it almost empty. With every gulp I felt a younger man. There are a score again as many in a chest."

"Push hard!" Kioga yelled. "Too late!" he added as a great wave lifted the ship and dropped it heavily upon a

ledge of rock. "We are aground. The tide moves out. We must remain until it comes in again and floats us free."

"Fear not," K'yopit shrilled in words that fell upon each other. "Come below with me, and drink of the magic water."

Kioga eyed the aged trader sharply. "His eyes are red. His face is flushed. He stutters," he muttered softly to Aki. "White men make potent medicines. Mayhap K'yopit found them."

The Snow Hawk took stock of their situation: The vessel was jammed fast on a sloping ledge. Naught but some outside force could ever set it free. He glimpsed the mighty grizzly climbing off upon the reef. The answer struck him.

"Aki, thy great strength shall help us. I'll tie these ropes round thy shoulders, thus—and fasten the other ends upon the sides of the ship—so. Now, then, K'yopit, since you have such strength, come help us."

K'yopit came, all confidence, flattered by the words, and obeyed. Kioga pushed against great Aki, and Aki gave a mighty lunge. What with the efforts of all three, the craft leaned over. A moment more, and it had been afloat. But all this stress and strain had proved too much for the rickety vessel. It creaked and groaned, then fell apart in separate pieces, which instantly were swamped.

"We are marooned. Our food is lost, our boat a wreck," Kioga declared, picking himself up from where the rope had dragged him. "They know it too," he added somberly, watching their dread companions of the outward voyage lifting ugly snouts above the water in the distance. Defiantly he shook his fist.

"Think not that you will dine on us, O blubber flukes! Blow, vultures of the sea. Gnash, hungry ones! Whales thou mayst kill, and helpless seals; but we will prove thy match, although in numbers thou hast grown to twelve!"

"Come, Aki, Mika! Stand up, K'yopit—is it cowardice that makes thee stagger back?"

"I? Afraid?" K'yopit answered thickly, dully indignant. "Lead on. We four will stand against the powers even of the sea!"

THE four waited there upon the reef until the tide was well out, and the reefs and ridges over which they had sailed this far gleamed bare and wet, with here and there great lakes and pools which never did recede. The four set out to get back to the mainland, quitting their lofty

place of wreckage, and fling down into the valleys of the reefs, now seldom more than knee-deep in water.

Upon a peak beyond Kioga paused after some hours, to look back southward toward the misted sea and the vanishing wreck of his little ship, which should have carried him to far adventure in his father's land. His shoulders slumped a little, and for all that he was now nearly seventeen, a slight quiver of the lip betrayed his deep regret.

FROM far behind, the faintest whisper for a moment, he heard a quiet mutter. He knew it for the returning tide, which sweeps in upon Nato'wa's coast with a power and a fury known nowhere else upon the earth.

"Quick!" cried the Snow Hawk, starting off. "The waters of the sea are coming. Make haste!"

K'yopit followed; and close on their heels came limping Mika and the bear, each footprint bloody. But now they had a constant reminder in that mounting roar behind them, more sinister for the fog which gave no glimpse of danger, while greatly amplifying sounds of it.

"I cannot walk longer," K'yopit cried at last, stumbling. "Do you go on alone."

"His courage holds," thought Kioga, but to the other said: "Hold to my shoulders—make haste, I'll help you."

Thus for a little time they made fair speed. But now the waters shouted behind. The fog lifted. Glancing back above one shoulder, Kioga saw what is called the primary crest—that first inflow of foam and small débris, spurred on by that fierce sea-squall cracking its whip of wind behind.

He held K'yopit tighter, set his teeth and struggled on, encouraged by a glimpse of land, and Mika climbing wearily up to safety among the rocks. Close by, faithful Aki rolled limping toward the land.

Kioga seized him by the scruff. "On, Aki," he whispered. The huge brute surged forward. The waters of the primary crest were at their heels, now swirling round about their ankles their knees, their thighs. A moment more, and Aki was afloat, and swimming more swiftly than he could have run on those poor bleeding feet, with a youth and an aged man clinging to him for dear life.

Now in their ears the sea was bellowing. A look back revealed a sight that almost stopped Kioga's heart: the curving main tide-crest, uprearing like some

stupendous animal tossing a snowy mane of yellow spume. K'yopit shrieked in terror. Even Aki's roar was shrill with fear. Kioga clenched his jaws, white-lipped.

Then with a crash like stunning thunder the tidal crest smote full against the sloping cliffs. Kioga's grip on Aki broke. The aged shaman was torn from his grasp. Smothered in foam, he saw black rocks before his eyes, reached, caught hold, hit hard against the cliffs, the breath gone from his body, where he lay wedged between the rocks.

UNCONSCIOUS for a moment, Kioga awoke to hear men's cries, almost lost in the roaring of the sea. He saw K'yopit seized by lean brown hands. He saw a warrior bend above himself. This was to be the end—of him who until now had defied the best of them! Strengthless, Kioga waited for the killing stroke with open eyes, a stoic to the last.

But to his surprise, the warriors gathered round about him, then raised him up and bore him on their shoulders toward the forest. He saw Miloka, once his father's friend, among them.

"Mock not my helplessness," Kioga said. "For if I am to die, I wish to die with proper dignity, like a warrior."

Miloka laughed aloud. "He talks of death, this Snow Hawk! He talks of death, who showed our people how to raise their walls so swiftly that when the Wa-Kanek came we laughed into their faces, and blotted them from our forests. Death—*ai!* But death to them who sought to kill thee, Kioga. Tonight we feast thee and thy wrinkled friend."

"Didst hear, K'yopit?" cried Kioga.

"Eh-eh," answered K'yopit between coughs which racked him still; "I heard, but when I think of those flagons sinking in our ship! Now shall I always remain a coward, as I was before."

But Kioga did not hear him. He heard instead a strange wild scream—the cry of Mika, in the distance. And back upon the cliffs, a bear's vast and shaggy form sat looking after their departure.

"You'll be a chief, before too long," Miloka now was saying. But even this Kioga did not hear. For what he long had sought—reunion with the Shoni tribesmen, high honors in the tribe—was far from mind.

His thoughts were with a little broken ship far out beyond the inner reefs.

Another of Mr. Chester's unique imaginative tales will appear in an early issue.

SHIPS and MEN

VIII

Work of the Dead

THERE are certain towns in the world through which most of us, to our loss, rush in order to get somewhere else. I like to linger in these places—Dover, Havre, Plymouth, Las Vegas in New Mexico, San Pedro, Pass Christian, to name a few. One turns up curious things in such places, especially if they be seaport towns.

No seaport is Brantford, on the Canada shore, but a dingy, calm, old-world solace to the nerves, with sweeping great trees in every street-vista, prim and precise as is most of eastern Canada to the American eye. It has a quaintness, a flavor of romance all its own, with its very name eloquent of Joseph Brant and colonial days.

Tucked away on a side street with a huge sugar-maple burgeoning before its entrance, I found a shop where a little old man sat among curious things. Not all old men are wise, but this one was. He had probing, twinkling eyes, and he kept rarely silent as I looked at old prints and Mohawk relics, Georgian silver and Victorian knickknacks. He was good at silence, a sure sign of wisdom.

I came back again and again, broke through his silence by degrees, and unearthed some real treasures from his stock. Come to find out, he had once been a college professor, back in New Brunswick, but had fallen upon evil days. His people had all been ship-builders "down East." He knew ships, up, down and across.

On the last day of my stay in town, I dropped into his shop and he brought forth a package wrapped in old yellowed newspapers. I noted, as he unwrapped



Etching by Yngve E. Soderberg

By H. BEDFORD-JONES
and CAPTAIN L. B. WILLIAMS



"There's a gift to the gods for you—
a real sacrifice of blood to Poseidon!"

them, that the newspapers were all dated in the year 1916. He laid bare the model of a ship—a queer ship. It had been built with beautiful precision in every detail.

"Hello!" I exclaimed. "That's something like! A Greek trireme, isn't it?"

"Right the first time," said he, with a nod of satisfaction. "A great link in the evolution of ships as they are today. The trireme—that wrote half the history of Greece in water, scattered colonies and civilization everywhere, whipped the Persians and changed the history of the world."

"Where'd you get this model?"

"It was made by my favorite pupil—a genius," he said slowly. "We worked out each detail together, he and I; from deduction, from new discoveries, from what is definitely known, from pictures on Greek vases, and so on."

I fingered the beautiful thing.

"Nobody knows how the trireme started, or who invented it?" I asked.

"Yes; that's a matter of definite record," said he, and launched into careful talk, gradually warming up to his subject. "It was invented about 700 B.C. by a citizen of Corinth named Aminocles. Up to that time, Corinth was just a small but promising city. She had founded a couple of colonies, Syracuse and Corcyra, and was at war with Corcyra. She was rather helpless, for the Corcyrans were seamen, and as yet the Corinthians were not."

I thought back to my half-forgotten Greek history.

"Corinth was ruled by a president and council, wasn't it?"

He was pleased to find that I was not a complete ignoramus.

"Exactly; she had plenty of money, a large growing trade, and was heading for the highway of destiny," he said. "This Aminocles was a trader, a seaman himself, a remarkable character. You know, those Greeks were rather barbarous at the time. They were writing history, and they wrote it in blood."

He hesitated and fell silent, frowning a little.

I studied the model, taking in more of its details. It was a perfect gem. Three banks of oars it displayed—hence the name *trireme*.

I WAITED. Something was coming; I could sense it.

Not in the big cities of the world are the curious things of history written. In a little town no larger than Brantford, I had looked upon the ring of Saladin, had heard the story of Saladin's armor, which is entirely authentic and exists to this day—one of the treasures of history, unguessed by the world.

"Do you know anything about this Aminocles chap?" I prompted at last.

"Yes. He owned a couple of trading ships—big ones for those days, with fifty oars and a mast nearly amidships. But he was working on new ideas, on a new form of ship; something hitherto unheard of. And Corinth laughed at him, said he was crazy, jeered at him.

"He got in bad with the priests of Poseidon, if you don't mind my using a bit of slang," and the old man chuckled. "Poseidon was the god of the sea, you know. This Aminocles had small reverence for the gods. So we find, one morning, his bloody dagger lying on the

altar of Poseidon, and a fine scene in progress."

He told me about it as though he had been there, with the blue sky of Greece overhead and the sunlight blazing down across the high white altar of the sea-god. The glittering waves of the gulf were outspread below the city, running off over the horizon.

BUT here at hand, all was rich with the pouring sunlight. The bloody dagger lay like a crimson smear on the white altar. And, standing by the altar, was Aminocles himself. He faced the angry priest of Poseidon, and the staring throng of citizens who had gathered around to see and to listen.

"There's a gift to the gods for you!" rang his voice, sonorous and ironical. "A real sacrifice of blood to Poseidon! In the darkness of night, men came out of the sea and slew my slaves and would have slain me. They went back to their boat and fled, taking their dead with them. And I still live."

The angry bearded priest answered him furiously.

"You have no respect for Poseidon. You scoff openly at the god and his power, and you pay him no tribute. You are now building a ship without making sacrifice to the god. Can you wonder that he sent men to slay you?"

"He made a poor job of it!"—and Aminocles laughed harshly. He was a tall, wide-shouldered man, with crisp yellow hair and blue eyes like ice. "Perhaps it was not the god, but the priest, who sent those killers—eh? Yes, I defy the power of Poseidon, and my ship defies it. She'll conquer the sea, all seas, for Corinth! So make the most of it, you snake-eyed priest!"

Here was defiance, sure enough, and men wondered that some monster did not come forth from the sea to catch and kill Aminocles for his blasphemy. He strode away and the crowd parted to let him through, some muttering at him, others praising his boldness. He might be a crazy inventor, but seamen liked him rarely, and he had a way of winning the love of men. But the sly priests of Poseidon liked him not.

He came into the slave-market and met his friend Persippas, who was his chief helper and assistant in the building of his new-fangled type of ship. A dark, keen man was Persippas, and these two were more like brothers than friends. Together they talked with the slave-

dealers, buying here and there men who had skill in building ships, for Aminocles ever sought more workers on his new craft.

And then they came face to face with the Cretan woman, the girl with red-gold hair and ruddy skin, who was just exposed for sale. Aminocles stood and stared at her, and Persippas caught his breath at the sight of her; for such beauty had not been seen in Corinth.

But Aminocles spoke first, his voice lifting above the bids of the merchants and nobles with a roaring offer that made everyone gape. Upon this startled pause, the Cretan girl was knocked down to him, and he came to her and took her hand.

"What is your name?"

"Ænone, lord," she said, looking him in the eyes.

"You are free," said Aminocles; "for I cannot marry a slave, and it is in my mind to wed you, if friendship grows between us. Go to my house; Persippas, will you lead her thither? Then join me at the dockyard, for I must haste."

So he went his way to where the ship was building, a lordly man, very swift in all impulses, living eagerly and joying in life, so that strangers to Corinth thought him some god when they first saw him. Persippas, however, led Ænone away, and talked with her, and his dark eyes held a flame when he looked upon her face.

He came at last to the ship and rejoined Aminocles.

"She is a treasure, my friend," he said. "And fresh from Crete. She knows much of shipbuilding."

"That is not her affair, but mine," said Aminocles. "Now look! The thing that puzzled us is solved." He pointed to massive timbers, reaching from the lower to the upper deck, and inclined toward the stern at an angle of sixty-four degrees. "Each of these timbers supports three oarsmen's benches. It is very simple, like all great things."

"Perhaps," said Persippas. "But I still think the shock of the seas will knock the upper part of this huge hull to pieces. We shall see."

THE ship grew with the days, grew to lines of the small model Aminocles had first made. Crowds of shipmen, citizens, sailors, gathered to watch and criticize as the tall sides arose and the ribs were covered and the decking laid in place. A higher and taller ship than

any known to man before this—but would it work?

The ram, the bronze spike for ramming other ships, was in place. From stem to stern, Aminocles ran waling-pieces—lusty timbers set within the ribs for strength. The goose-neck rose high, carven and gilded. The three tiers of benches were set for the rowers; the two masts were stepped. The great ship was ready to launch.

BUT, in this time, other things had passed ashore.

Aminocles, in his simple and forthright manner, had freed Cœnone, had given her place in his home, had found friendship ripening into love. He was driven night and day by the fury of construction; for the moment, his ship came first. Yet he was ever more deeply in love with this woman—as was half Corinth, for that matter.

The nobles, the students, the philosophers, came to talk with her and to admire her beauty and wisdom. She was ever very calm and serene and gracious, seeming far removed from human passion; that she was to be the wife of Aminocles was well understood. And he, busy each day in the shipyard by the shore, rejoiced that Corinth found her so supreme.

But before Persippas, that dark and keen and piercing man, came gradually to open a yawning gulf.

For, be Aminocles ever so kingly, so godlike in all his ways, his friend Persippas had the eye and heart and wisdom of man, which was much more to the point in the practical affairs of life. It was Persippas who went to the priests of Poseidon, with warning that were Aminocles again molested by men from the sea, he himself would slay these priests; and he abated their hatred, for the moment, by sacrifices.

True as steel, never boasting, indeed speaking little, Persippas could get as much out of the workmen as could the impetuous and eager Aminocles. And, with as true eye to himself as to aught else, Persippas knew clearly enough that he, too, loved this Cretan woman; what was more, he knew that she loved him in return.

With Persippas, Cœnone was no longer cold and serene. It was to him that she came with perplexities and troubles, until the bonds between them grew solid and enduring; yet most often it was of Aminocles that they talked.

"When I speak to him of ships," she said, her lovely eyes clouding, "he laughs and jests and will not be serious. He seems to hear what likes him best, and to be deaf to all else. Yet my father was chief naval architect to the king of Crete; and I am no fool."

"No; you are the most beautiful woman in the world," said Persippas quietly. "So beautiful that Aminocles looks upon you, and is blinded by love."

"And you?" she asked, smiling. He shrugged a little, and parried the question.

"By Zeus, I am not blind, at least! Well, I must go; the calking is my task, and it must get under way. We're approaching completion."

"And ruin," she said, looking at him strangely.

Persippas remembered that look, as he sought the shipyards. He knew how fine and true was this woman, how splendid and frank was his own friendship with Aminocles. He swore by all the gods that come what might, no word or act of his should sully this friendship and the trust Aminocles had in him.

WHEN he had set the gangs of calkers to work and saw that things were going aright, he went into the ship. He found Aminocles stripped and at work with the rest, building the platforms for the two steering-oars in the stern. They drew aside and talked, and Aminocles asked what had become of the model trireme he had built.

"It's at your house," said Persippas. "Cœnone was examining it. By the way, aren't you making a mistake by not talking construction with her? She knows a good deal about the business."

"Women know everything there is to know about everything!"—and laughing, Aminocles clapped him on the shoulder. "No, this is a seaman's job, old chap. I've seen her on the wall up yonder, every afternoon, watching the work and followed by a dozen gallants. She swallows all the nonsense Corinth yaps—"

"She'd give her life for you," said Persippas. "She wants only to help you."

"Aye." Aminocles squinted down the deck, and nodded. "Right. But I want no repeating of all the knocks and the half-baked criticism that Corinth utters. These nobles and merchants don't know our business; and we do, Persippas. They're betting more and more heavily that this ship of mine won't stand the strain."

"And you've been taking the bets until your whole fortune is tied up!"

"Well, haven't you?"

The two friends laughed together. Then Persippas sobered.

"I support you; not that I believe in you, mind! I don't think the ship's strong enough for the stress and strain."

"Oh, absurd!" Aminocles exclaimed. "Man, those waling-pieces—"

"Are inside the ribs. They'll stand up against outside shock, yes. But what about these tremendous beams which support the rowers' benches?"

"Who the devil told you that?" Aminocles asked quickly, with a sharp look. "Hm! I was worried about those beams myself. That's why I've double-braced them. So don't worry about inward stress. When will you have the calking finished?"

"End of the week."

"Good. Another week, and we'll have the Admiralty test out the ship—a three-day cruise down the Gulf and back, rowers and soldiers aboard."

So it was arranged; but the priests of Poseidon muttered that without sacrifices the sea-god would grant no good luck to this new ship.

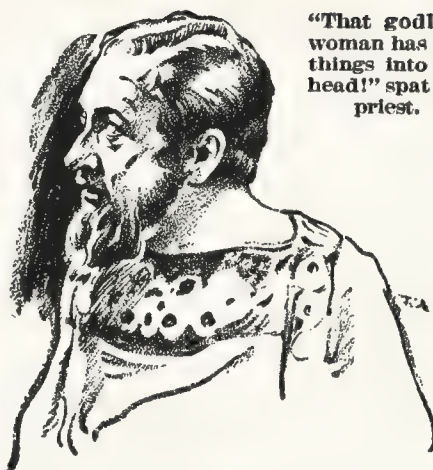
She was launched, and floated bravely in the basin, towering above all other galleys, and dwarfing even the battered Phœnician traders of huge beam. And suddenly Corinth began to see this great ship with new eyes, with the eager eyes of Aminocles himself. The betting languished, the odds lessened. If she won the test, then indeed was a new era opened for Corinth, an era of conquest that would sweep the seas!

"I am afraid," said Cœnone, as she talked with Persippas. Before them was the model that Aminocles had first built; she had begged it as a gift, and her finger touched it as they talked. "Did you give Aminocles the hint about the inner strain?"

"Told him flatly," said Persippas. "He had thought of the same thing; said he had double-braced all those beams."

SHE shook her head, then pointed. They were sitting in the hillside garden that overlooked the slope to the Gulf, where the whitecaps tossed in the sunlight. Below, in the harbor, lay the ship to which she had pointed.

"You see that Phœnician trader, Persippas? She has just come from Corcyra. I was talking with merchants who came in her—strange, furtive men.



"That godless woman has put things into his head!" spat the priest.

Corcyra is the bitter enemy of this city, although her offspring. The war has gone badly."

"Yes?" Persippas knitted his black brows into a bar as he gazed upon her. "And what's in your mind?"

"I don't know," she admitted. "Aminocles laughs at vague warnings; but I must be vague. There are too many who hate him, who envy him."

"Envy doesn't mean hatred," Persippas said slowly. "His best friends might envy him, yet be true to him."

"Don't bandy words; you know what I mean," Cœnone rejoined. "Watch over him."

"I shall."

"And I'm going on that test cruise with the ship."

"You? A ship's no place for a woman."

She laughed a little. "You talk like one of the city fathers. Now, there's something I want you to do for me."

"Anything," said Persippas. Just the one word; but it held so much that a slow touch of color mounted in her face, and silenced her. She looked into his eyes, and her color deepened.

"With one word—to put me to shame!" she murmured. "Oh, Persippas! You are too wise. You must not—you must not love me."

He clenched his lips for an instant, then made determined answer as he read her gaze.

"And you, Cœnone—you must not love me."

They were strained and tense, both of them; a moment of unveiled eyes, of torn and hurting spirits, until suddenly Persippas lifted his head.

"Well?" he asked roughly. "What is it you want me to do?"

"Avert ruin," she said, "For his sake." She told him what to do, then, but he frowned over her words, not comprehending what she meant. Nor would she explain.

"Never mind; do all this, be ready, and let's see." She held out her hand to him.

Persippas looked at her slender, delicate fingers lying in his hard palm; he stooped, and kissed them. His heart pounded, his temples throbbed. She loved him, as he loved her. He knew it as though she had spoken the words.

Then, with a curt nod, he turned away and departed.

THE ship was being fitted and finished. The Admiralty insisted that she be named after her builder, so she was given the name of Aminocles. In these short days, Corinth had swiftly caught up the vision of this man, so lately reviled as a crazed dreamer, until now the whole city was afire with his ideas.

No cargo-vessel was this trireme, but purely and simply a fighting-ship—the first naval unit. This novel conception set a spark to the imagination of the impulsive, fickle Corinthians. Already the council was talking of floating a war **lean** in order to build a hundred such triremes, a fighting-fleet which would be more than a mere collection of trading-ships—the first naval force in history.

That the test cruise would succeed, was taken as a matter of course. Aminocles was voted a seat in the council, a patent of nobility, special civic honors; suddenly he had become the most popular man in Corinth. He took it all in his carefree, splendid fashion, and went on working day and night over the ship.

A picked crew was put aboard and trained for the trial cruise, Persippas taking charge of this matter. So the work drew to an end, until even Aminocles could see no least detail that was undone. On the morrow, the cruise would begin.

That night, one of the priests of Poseidon came to the house of Aminocles, and talked with him and with Persippas. The sacrificial omens, said the priest darkly, were bad. The attitude of Aminocles was unfortunate. He must show proper respect to the sea-god and to the priests; he must provide large sacrifices for the morrow. At this, Aminocles laughed heartily.

"Bad omens, eh? You mean there's weather making. I know it myself,

without any of your mumbo-jumbo; any seaman knows it. And this ship of mine will laugh at any weather, as I laugh at you. Sacrifices? Hell take you! Don't think you can rule me. You can't. Get out of here before I kick you out."

Splendid, headstrong, blind, this man of no guile. Persippas went out into the street with the furious priest of Poseidon, and halted him.

"Heed him not, priest, but listen to me—"

"Heed him not?" spat the angry priest. "Let him heed Poseidon! Aye, and that she-devil from Crete, that godless woman! It is she who has put such things into the man's head."

"Careful," said Persippas; and so sharp was his voice that it silenced the priest. "Listen to me. Forget what was said. At dawn, the sacrifices will arrive, in the name of Aminocles. Let all be done properly, with due respect to Poseidon and his priests."

A tactful man, Persippas, a shrewd and wise man. The priest grudgingly admitted as much, and allowed himself to be appeased. There was no weakness in this action on the part of Persippas, but deep wisdom; it was an effort to stave off trouble which would come at a bad moment if these priests chose to exert themselves.

He said nothing, of course, to Aminocles of what he had done. Inwardly, he had a new sharp fear. So the priests blamed Cēnone, did they? That was bad. They were quite capable of anything. That evening, when he was alone with her for a little while, he told Cēnone of what had passed, and of his fear. She smiled.

"My friend, thank you for the warning. But, if this trial cruise succeeds, these priests can do nothing. Aminocles will be the first man in Corinth, and Corinth the first city in the world."

"And you, the wife of Aminocles," said Persippas. For a long moment, her eyes met his, again with unuttered thoughts.

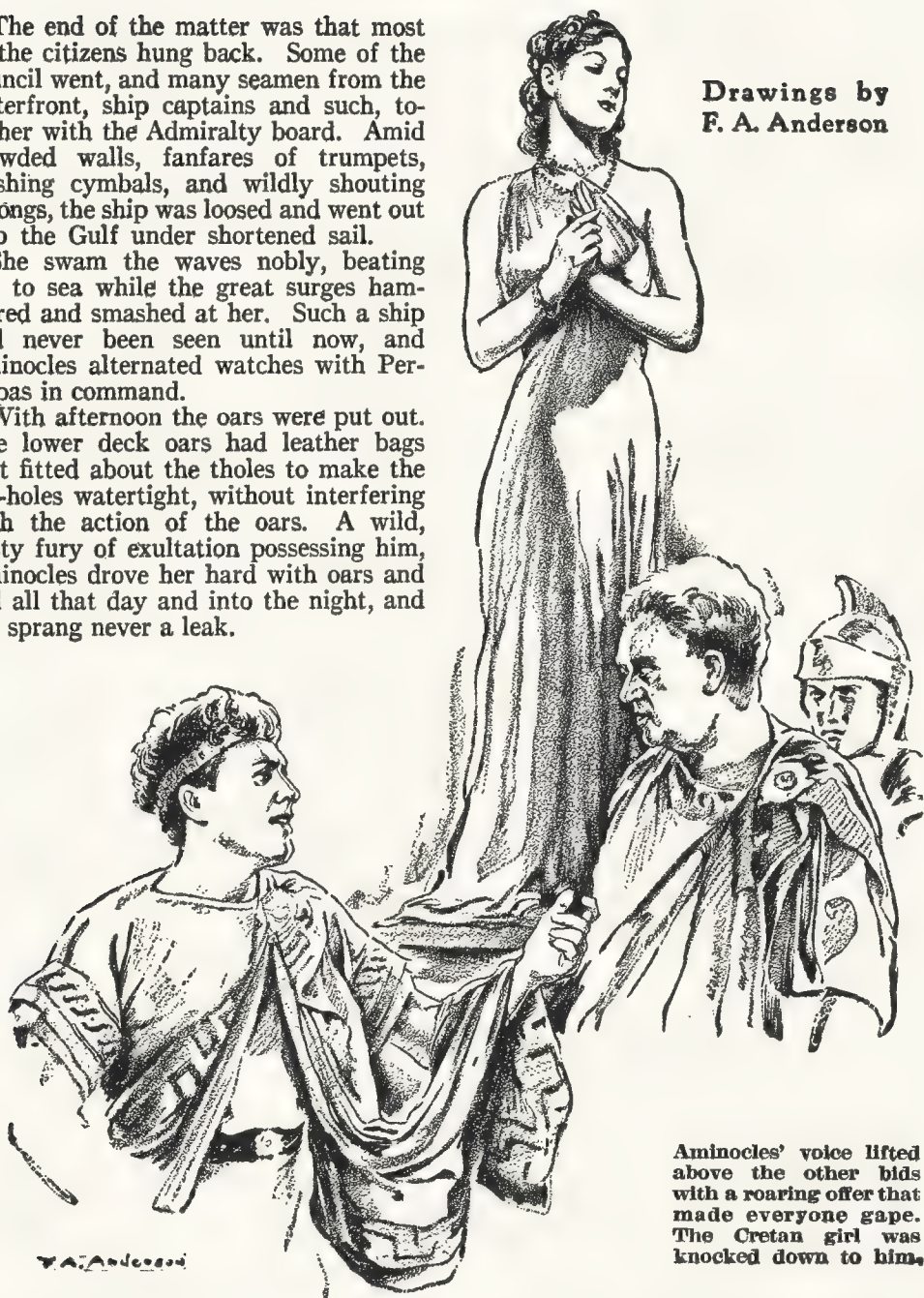
"Yes," she said quietly.

MORNING brought a scud of gray cloud, tossing gray sea, and joyous laughter from Aminocles as the great ship prepared to sail, with members of the council, chief citizens, all who wished to go aboard her. Wait for calm weather? Not he! Let this be a test indeed! And if citizens got seasick let the gods help them!

The end of the matter was that most of the citizens hung back. Some of the council went, and many seamen from the waterfront, ship captains and such, together with the Admiralty board. Amid crowded walls, fanfares of trumpets, clashing cymbals, and wildly shouting throngs, the ship was loosed and went out into the Gulf under shortened sail.

She swam the waves nobly, beating out to sea while the great surges hammered and smashed at her. Such a ship had never been seen until now, and Aminocles alternated watches with Persippas in command.

With afternoon the oars were put out. The lower deck oars had leather bags that fitted about the tholes to make the oar-holes watertight, without interfering with the action of the oars. A wild, gusty fury of exultation possessing him, Aminocles drove her hard with oars and sail all that day and into the night, and she sprang never a leak.



Drawings by
F. A. Anderson

Aminocles' voice lifted above the other bids with a roaring offer that made everyone gape. The Cretan girl was knocked down to him.

When darkness came, the Admiralty board were more than satisfied.

"Enough, enough!" said they unanimously, between seasick groans. "Put about for Corinth!"

"Put about? Not I!" shouted Aminocles joyously. "Three days, said you; and three days it is. Storm? Let Poseidon do his worst! Let him hurl the whole vasty deep upon us, and this ship will still conquer him!"

So it seemed, in all truth.

Morning brought still wilder seas, but the ship rode them easily. Now Enone went with others about the ship, examining all below and aloft. Toward noon, she came to Persippas, who was on watch, and mounted into the stern beside him, and beckoned. He followed her down into the lee of the deck-house, for so wild and shrill was the wind that talk was impossible elsewhere.

There she spoke swiftly, and his bronzed face went white.

"Right," he said. "I'll waken him; he's asleep. Get under shelter."

He eyed the gray mountain-peaks and changed the course, setting the sails and running straight before the wind. Presently Aminocles came on deck with gusty oaths, and sought Persippas.

"What the devil made you change course? I ordered—"

"Never mind your orders," said Persippas. "Come with me."

Alone, the two of them went down into the creaking, groaning hold, atop the well-stowed ballast. There Persippas got a lamp alight, and took Aminocles the length of the ship, and showed him where the massy beams that supported the rowers' benches came together.

One after another; all the same story. One deep moan broke from Aminocles, but he said no word until the inspection was done. Then he stood, bracing himself against the ship's roll.

"So! It is failure," he muttered. "You warned me; she warned me. What a blind fool I was and am! Why, the accursed ship is splitting asunder!"

"She'll hold," said Persippas, "if we run for Corinth with the following wind. And you've not failed yet. Cheer up, man! Cēnone has some plan. She predicted this. She had me arrange a remedy. True, the weight of these beams won't stand the stress of seaway, but there's a cure. We'd best talk with her at once. And let no one know of this."

Aminocles looked at him with bitter eyes, then dashed out the lamp.

"True friend," said his voice in the darkness. "Aye, true friend, Persippas! Sometimes there comes a moment of wakening to a man."

"What mean you?" exclaimed Persippas. "What are you driving at?"

"You take me for a blind laughing fool, and it's true enough. But a moment comes, always. I've seen you look at her, and her at you; I've read your hearts like your eyes."

PERSIPPAS went cold.

"What of it?" said he, and then was astonished to hear the ghost of that brave wild laugh, and to feel the hand of Aminocles clamp down on his shoulder.

"What of it, Persippas? Everything. True friend, true heart; both of you, true as steel! You're ten times the man I am, and that's the honest truth. D'ye think I'd have a wife that loves another? Not I, by the gods! It's been a bad moment all around—seeing one thing, say-

ing another. This calamity and that hurt i' the heart. These beams splintering, this ship falling to pieces under us; and she loving you. Well, I love you too, old friend. Now let's get on deck and make the best of things, and somehow we'll beat the sea-god yet."

Their hands met and clenched hard for an instant.

ALL day they ran before the gale, with the sails blowing out into ribbons and new canvas blowing out, and finally a mere scrap to send them bowling ahead, so that they made no speed but had scant battering from the waves. In the cabin assigned her, Cēnone sat toying with the trireme model which she had brought along, but there was no time for either Aminocles or Persippas to seek her out. When one of them left the deck, he dropped and slept, and rose to take the deck again. To bring that ship home safe, with no soul aboard suspecting that she was falling apart under them, was man's work.

The inner stress—that was the devil of it. No carpentry would avail to hold against it; no carpentry that Aminocles could devise would do the work. When evening rushed down the dark gray sea, and they bore on for Corinth, they had a word together.

"You've not seen Cēnone?" asked Persippas. "She's kept below."

"No time." Aminocles wiped the salt from his curling yellow hair. "We're doing it; keep easing the ship off with every sea, and we'll manage it. But it's hell's own job. What a fool I was!"

"What a man you are!" Persippas exclaimed. "I don't know what's in her mind, either. She had me prepare huge cables; they're all ready, in the storehouse. Why, I don't know."

"Cables?" And Aminocles snorted. "What good is flaxen hemp when beams and nails won't hold? Well, take over; and the gods help us if we make the harbor and they don't have the flares alight to guide us in!"

It was the second watch of the night when the ruddy glimmer of the flares was descried. The ship was leaking badly now, wrenching asunder beneath them, but this very weight served to steady her. Persippas, who had the deck, went down himself to waken Aminocles with the good news of Corinth close.

He roused up his friend, then went to the cabin of Cēnone. All was dark in the passage, for no lights could endure

this tossing; but as he approached her cabin, Persippas collided with some one in the blackness. A startled oath. A blade bit at him. With a shout, Persippas grappled with the unseen man. They reeled to and fro, and the knife slashed again.

Then Persippas, wild with pain and fury, backheeled the man and they went to the deck in frantic unseen struggle; and ere Aminocles came running, Persippas had his own knife out and at work. That man died there. He was one of the crew.

"Hurt? There's blood on your arms," cried Aminocles, as he helped Persippas to rise. "Why, the man must have gone mad—"

Not mad, but caught almost in the act of his black murderous work. Together they found Enone lying as she had been stabbed, her lovely eyes welcoming them, a faint murmur on her lips.

"New hemp!" she said. "Remember, Persippas—new hemp, as I told you. The water shrinks it, and—and then—"

That was all.

It was Aminocles who brought in the ship, as Persippas lay below beside the dead woman, his wounds bandaged. Aminocles, dazed and blinded by the shock and the grief that was upon him, aged twenty years in that night, yet bringing in the ship perfectly and seeing to all details, and shunning the roaring welcome of Corinth. The city had thought the ship lost, and all the people came with torches ablaze so that the water and the sky were ruddy.

But Aminocles came down into the cabin and barred the door, and stood staring at the dead woman and the bandaged man, and the model trireme that was on the deck. He set his lamp on the table, picked up the model, and frowned at it.

"Her gift," said Persippas. "Her gift to you, Aminocles. Are we in?"

HAGGARD of face, Aminocles nodded. "Aye, we're in," he said dully. "Her gift? True enough. She's dead, Persippas; the most beautiful woman in the world, and the wisest. She's dead. And she loved you."

"But her gift was to you," Persippas said gently.

Aminocles looked at the model again. "The cables; you see? All hell couldn't burst them. Look! She's twisted cords

to show how. They follow the lines of the waling-pieces inside the ribs. . . . Hell take the ship!"

He suddenly flung the model into the corner, put his face into his hands, and sat there with silent tears trickling through his fingers.

In the days that followed, the ship was put into drydock. The great cables of new hemp, two of them, were fastened about her from stem to stern, then were twisted and made so strongly taut that they became a very part of her. And when she was put into the water again, the hemp shrank, until it was as though two iron bands were about the galley, holding her solid against all stress. . . .

Through following years and centuries, the galleys of Corinth and of Greece, lordly triremes bound about with twin cables that all hell could not burst, conquered the coasts and the islands, subdued the broad wine-dark seas, scorned and smashed the might of Persia, set the grip of the sea-god at naught, and wrote the name of Greece large in naval history.

Where the triremes went, also went the memory of a friendship strong as the twin cables that held the triremes together. Thus, when seamen came to set names to these cables, the one was called Aminocles and the other Persippas. These names endured until later days when men learned how to build ships that held without the binding hemp.

Such was the tale of the trireme.

ILLUSION vanished. I was back again in Brantford on the Canada shore, in the little dingy shop of the old man who had told the story. He sat with his chin sunk on his breast, forgetful of me.

I fingered the model again, touching the two binding cables, the finely carven wood, the minutely fashioned oars.

"What's your price on this?" I asked. "I'd like to buy it."

The old man stirred. He gathered up the heap of yellowed newspapers, dated twenty years ago, and shook his head.

"I'm afraid it's not for sale," he said gently. "You see, it was made by my favorite pupil—he was my son. That's his picture there, on the wall."

I turned and looked at the picture. A young man, a smiling boyish face, the uniform of the Canadian Highlanders, and under it the words:

Killed in Action. 1916.

"The Things that Are Caesar's," another memorable story in this Ships and Men series, will be a feature of our September issue.

THE ISLAND

The distinguished author of "Porto Bello Gold" and "The Eagle's Shadow" here offers a daring novelette of fantastic adventure.

By ARTHUR D.
HOWDEN SMITH

MY name is Terry O'Malley. If that doesn't mean anything to you, call up the Wanderers, or the American Museum or the Field or the Smithsonian. Or ask Bill Dempsey, the managing editor of the *Dispatch*. Anyhow, I'm not a liar. I spent too many years as a newspaper reporter to get a kick out of telling stories just for the fun of seeing that blank look come into a man's eyes.

I'd been back in New York a week, after six months in New Guinea, sweating in jungles and freezing on mountains, incidentally collecting modern Stone Age artifacts for the Cleveland people.

Well, I was going into the Wanderers for my mail, and the porter said: "There's a gentleman to see you, sir, a Major Rattray. He's in the small writing-room."

I liked this feller Rattray the moment I laid eyes on him. English as the Tower of London, he was; lean, hard, with the mark of a chin-strap around his weathered jaw. But I saw his worried look.

"I'm Gerald Rattray," he said, shaking hands. "King's African Rifles. This letter's for you—from 'Boots' Tinkham."

"If you're a friend of Boots, you must be O. K., Major," I cracked. Boots had been a buddy of mine, one time I was after pygmy rhinoceri in Nigeria.

The letter was curt, and to the point. "Gerry Rattray will hand you this, old bean," it said. "He's in some complicated trouble, which he can explain better than I can. They don't come any better. If you can give him a hand up, it won't be wasted effort. Cheerio."

"That's a blank letter of credit, Major," I said. "How much do you want to tell me?"

"Everything," he answered. "If you have time."



I had a glimpse of huge shapes plunging about. "Keep piling 'em!" shouted Bud, banking the plane in a circle.

MONSTER



He looked out the window, while he stuffed tobacco in his pipe-bowl.

"It's a crazy yarn, Mr. O'Malley," he began suddenly. "And I'm frank to say I don't understand it. But if you'll be charitable,"—he flushed a little,—“it was like this: About a year ago I met an American girl named Ann Parsons. She

was a biologist with the Stein-Bradshaw expedition, working in the back-country, near my post, this side of Sokotra. We saw a good deal of each other. . . . We—we became engaged. When she left for the States, it was understood that I'd take leave, come over here and we'd be married. I ought to say she's an orphan. An uncle in California brought her up. She'd been home only a month when she wrote me we'd have to put off our marriage for a year. She'd received an exceptionally good offer to collaborate in some laboratory experiments with a feller named Lipscomb Hope."

I leaned forward involuntarily.

"You know him?" asked Rattray.

I nodded. "He's very rich. Has quite a reputation as a scientist. He helped to finance my Sumatran expedition—I caught some swell pythons for him."

"Ever met him?" snapped Rattray.

"No—only heard him lecture. But go on, Major. I'm interested."

RATTRAY hauled a packet of envelopes out of his pocket.

"It seemed all right at the time," he resumed. "Naturally, I was disappointed. But I understood how she felt—for one thing, the money she was to earn would be sufficient to reimburse her uncle for the cost of her education. There was nothing to make me suspicious until I received her last letter, in which she writes that it will be impossible for her to give up this job with Hope for an indefinite period, and that our marriage must be postponed in the meantime. But even then I wouldn't have suspected anything wrong, except for— If you'll allow me to read this passage?"

"Go ahead," I told him.

He flapped the letter open, and cleared his throat: "I do love you, Gerry, and miss you very much. It grieves me to have to put you off. Perhaps you would rather not wait. But if you will wait, why don't you start your own stamp-collection, as I suggested?"

Rattray broke off. "Funny, you know, but she had been after me all year to go in for stamps. A silly-ass stunt, I think. I used to devil her about it. I'd never have got on to her game if it hadn't been— But listen to this." He continued: "'Start it with this stamp. I have all yours, some of which I am trading in with a dealer. You'd be amazed how my collection grows.'"

"And so?" I prompted him, as he turned the letter over in his hands. He

offered me the envelope. The stamp had been detached. In the space it had occupied were lines of microscopically fine writing: "*Gerry dear, won't you understand? He won't let me go. I know too much. He's crazy.*"

"Dirty work at the crossroads," I exclaimed.

"Quite," assented Rattray. "And I shouldn't have tumbled even then, if it hadn't been that that stamp was unglued at one corner. I worked it off while I was grousing to myself over the letter. That put the wind up with me, I can tell you! I dug out her other letters, and peeled off every stamp. Read 'em for yourself, Mr. O'Malley."

The writing, I ought to say in the first place, was obviously that of a person of unquestionable mental capacity and self-command, not in any degree evidencing hysteria or neurotic tendencies. The messages were amazing—and at first glance, preposterous. I encountered such items as: "*Monsters are terrible. Those hissing roars at night!*" And: "*I'm so afraid of the rats. Giants, Gerry. And they squeal so.*" Then: "*Pycrocs have brains. They're cunning. Won't go near wire.*" I reread that one; the next explained it: "*Cement wall all round lake, swamps, breeding-pens. Electric wire a hundred feet high on top.*" Again: "*Pycrocs can stand tremendous voltage, but boom if shocked. . . . One monster almost got over yesterday. Guards killed it.*"

And still more puzzling: "*Robot machine-guns, guards, automatic search-lights, floods. . . . Please help me! Do something, Gerry.*" And: "*Feeding-time. How the rats squeal! . . . Lew Starling would help, if he dared.*" And a dozen statements like these: "*Hope is crazy. . . . Hope will destroy civilization. . . . How can Colonial officials be so duped?*" Or: "*Dynamos whirring. Alpha Ray. Means another monster.*"

BY this time I was ga-ga myself. Some of the messages didn't seem to make sense, although every one was coherent. For instance: "*Ganoo the man-monkey frightens me most. . . . Ganoo looks at me horribly. He's afraid only of Hope. Ganoo killed guard. Tore him apart.*"

As bizarre as they were, however, these messages were uncannily real. And they conveyed a sense of abysmal horror.

"Where is she?" I asked. "Where is this place?"

"Barstow's Island, in the Bahamas," explained Rattray. "I checked up on

that as well as I could. It's southeast of the group. Remote. Hope bought it several years ago. I'm told he erected an elaborate group of buildings on it."

"What have you done so far?"

"Cabled her from Lagos, soon as I came down-country, inquiring what I could do for her. She cabled back: '*Nothing. But please wait. Love. Ann.*' I cabled the Governor at Nassau. He answered promptly: 'Miss Parsons dined at Government House two nights since. Very well, and interested in Hope experiments. You must be misinformed.'"

I drummed on the arm of my chair.

"WHAT do you think of it, Mr. O'Malley?" pressed Rattray. "Do you know anything of Hope?"

"Only what's generally known of him," I said. "He's more of a scientist than a capitalist. That is, he uses his money to exploit his theories. He's a nut on bionomy—which, in case you don't know it, is the branch of biology treating of breeding and adaptation of racial strains. Hope has very radical views on the subject. He resigned from the American Scientific Association after they refused to vote an endorsement of certain claims he made. He'd said he could blend any types—of course, within the species. And there was something about giantism, too. He claimed he could develop any creature to an exaggerated size, and stimulate the rate of growth. It made a big stir; would have attracted more notice if he hadn't got sore at being kidded, and refused to spill any more to the newspapers. Typical of him; he's arrogant; and he has a theory that man has reached the peak of his evolution, and could be abolished with profit."

"Nice sort of chap," snorted Rattray. "But what am I going to do? It isn't a police case. A man like Hope wouldn't stop at anything to keep Ann from talking." His bronzed cheeks blanched. "I admit I'm scared."

"No, this is not a police case," I agreed. "International complications, tremendous wealth, influence, all that sort of thing, against you. But I have an idea—"

"I'm not a rich man, you know," Rattray put in apologetically. "I might raise a couple of thousand pounds, but—"

"Stow it," I said—have I made it plain that I'd taken a fancy to the bird? "We've got to out-think a crazy genius. Now, what's he most afraid of?"

Rattray shook his head. "I haven't thought that far."

"Publicity," I exclaimed triumphantly. "We'll go to my old boss, Dempsey, of the *Dispatch*. What's more, we'll make the old lizard finance our expedition."

"Ours?" repeated Rattray. "You—you mean you'll—"

"You bet I will," I told him vigorously. "This situation has hooked me plenty. Come on—we'll hop downtown."

Dempsey was sitting at his desk when we came in, squat, belligerent, chewing at a long black cigar.

"I don't want to buy any phony pictures, and I'm not interested in the customs of New Guinea blacks," he barked. "You can take your brand of muck to the Sunday editor—he has softening of the brain, poor slob."

"Shut up, Dempsey," I said gently. "I'm talking."

I told him the story, showed him the letters, gave him an outline of Lipscomb Hope's past. In the middle of it he sent to the morgue for the Hope clippings, and shuffled them through his fingers while I carried on. Dempsey knows that no story is too extraordinary to be true.

"Sounds plausible—if you haven't been tipping the bottle, Terry," he grunted when I had ground to a finish. "What do you want?"

"An unlimited expense-account, Bud Schreiber's amphibian and ten thousand bucks cold for the story, exclusive rights to you."

Dempsey removed the cigar from his mouth, spat once and said: "If this is a run-around, I'll roast you until you haven't a shred of scientific reputation left. Closed, Terry. *Beaucoup* pictures—and facts! Something the *Dispatch* can print without being laughed at."

"I can only say thank you, Mr. Demp—" began Rattray.

"Stow it," growled Dempsey. "Let's see what happens. Run along now, boys. I have a newspaper to get out."

CHAPTER II

FIRST thing, we packed a kit for the Major, and checked him out of his hotel. I looked over his battery, and we decided to cart along an automatic for his hip and a sound, custom-built sporting-rifle he said he had used on big game. Then we went to my rooms, and picked up a grip I always keep packed, my pet camera, a .45 and an elephant-gun, which last, we agreed, ought to be prime for the monsters his girl wrote about. After a

stop at the bank, we drove into the Newark airport at five after three. Bud's eight-passenger amphibian was out on the runway, motors idling, Bud himself standing alongside.

He's a chunk of a man, built like a pile-driver, with a broad face and keen blue eyes. He shook hands with Rattray. I could see they approved of each other.

"All set," he said. And noticing our battery, which the driver was handing to one of the mechanics for stowage, he added: "On the warpath? Glad I packed a Tommy-gun under my seat."

We had a tail-wind, and the amphibian was hitting close to two hundred after Bud leveled off at twenty-five hundred feet. So I slid in beside Bud, and spilled the story. He was excited, for him. "Sounds too good to be true," was his comment. "Monsters, eh? And a crazy goof, and a gal to be rescued. Blow me, but we might be a three-ace hand of tin knights off on a lark!"

We hit Miami about ten o'clock that night, saw the ship housed, and drove into town to a hotel, leaving orders to be waked at eight in the morning. At breakfast Bud produced a flying-chart of the Florida coast, the Bahamas and the Greater Antilles.

"Here's your Barstow's Island," he said, stabbing a pencil at a green blob in the expanse of ocean. "Bigger than it looks. There's what should be a bay at the north end, and a lagoon or lake that could be several miles square, is in the middle. Off to the northwest"—and he pointed at a lesser blob—"maybe thirty miles, here's a second island, no name, seems to be uninhabited, with an open lagoon. That might be a place for us to hole up, if necessary. It's a strategic location, and the mangrove swamps should provide cover for us. Now, gents, what are the orders?"

We decided, after some discussion, to make a preliminary stop at Nassau to replenish gas and oil and get whatever information we could come across casually.

THE Gulf Stream was a smoky blue band. There was the usual huddle of fishing-boats inshore, a coasting steamer or two, and then emptiness, except for the splash of an occasional tarpon or sailfish. Bud loafed along easily, on half-throttle, the cabin-windows wide open and the salt wind whistling in the propellers. It was on the edge of noon when we glided down on the water of Nassau harbor. Bud taxied in and out of the

huddle of yachts and excursion boats toward the moorings off the Royal Yacht Club landing.

"I say," exclaimed Rattray, "this craft we're coming up to is as big as a small cruiser." I agreed with him, and he leaned out a window for a closer inspection. "By Jove," he exclaimed again. "American colors, what? Your rich people certainly do themselves well. But look at that for'ard deckhouse. It's an oblong turret. See the steel port shutters? Bet you it houses a three-inch gun."

Bud gave it a brief glance. "Shouldn't be surprised," he assented.

Rattray leaned farther out.

"Oh, I say, Bud, go slow," he urged. "In closer to her quarter. D'you see those black fellers at the rail? Nigerians!" They were noticeable men, I perceived, tall, coppery, with thin high noses, and wearing scarlet shirts and shorts.

"Komokos—from the upper oil rivers," Rattray went on, brows knitted reflectively. "Had some of 'em in my battalion. Snake-worshippers. If you don't mind, I'll give 'em a hail."

"Sure," Bud yawned, and we glided closer, the negroes evidently interested in the great flying-boat.

RATTRAY called to them in their guttural, clicking speech, and the three started in astonishment. A burly white man leaned over the railing and shouted angrily at the blacks. Rattray ducked back into the cabin.

"That's Hope," I gasped.

Bud pursed his lips. "I can guess who owns that young man-o'-war," he stated. "Say, any guy who uses Nigerian snake-worshippers is somebody I'd prefer to see over gun-sights."

Bud rounded to a mooring smartly, and I stepped out on the wing to make fast the bow-line. A kicker-dory was putting out from the pier, with the blackest black man I ever saw handling the guiding ropes.

"Watch out there," I hailed him as he ran alongside.

"I shall employ discretion, sar," he replied. "My purpose is to offer you and the other gentlemen a passage ashore."

"And who might you be?" I asked.

"I, sar, am Captain Robert Anthony Chumley-Jones, licensed waterman. You need be under no apprehension to entrust yourselves to my care; and for a slight additional honorarium I shall take pleasure in safeguarding your airplane."

"What do you say, Bud?" I called.

"We've got to go ashore," Bud answered in a strangled voice. "Perhaps Captain Chumley-Jones would also honor us by accepting a further honorarium for seeing that the tanks are filled."

"I shall be delighted to do so, Captain," returned the waterman.

HE assisted us into his dory with every courtesy.

"Who owns the big yacht, Captain?" asked Rattray. The black man turned to him. "Ah, sar, it is an additional pleasure to serve a fellow-subject of His Majesty. The yacht out there is the property of an American, a Mr. Hope."

"I see he carries a negro crew," remarked Rattray.

There was no doubt about the disapproval in Captain Chumley-Jones' reply.

"Savages, sar," he stated. "Ignorant Africans—heathens."

"Does he spend much time in Nassau?" Rattray inquired.

"I understand, sar, he has leased from the Colonial authorities one of our more remote islands. He employs a considerable staff, both white and black, including one very charming young lady, who evinces none of his incivilities. But I am incompetent to speak of her, since I have observed her only at a distance."

Rattray's breath hissed in his nostrils.

Bud saved the situation: "Say, Captain, where did you go to college?"

"I majored in the arts, sar, at the University of London, after completing my overseas service with the Royal West Indian Regiment. But here is the pier, gentlemen."

We had a drink in a convenient pub, and were dawdling past an electrical-goods shop while Rattray caught a light for his pipe, as a little, hurrying sort of man, who wore glasses and showed a whitish fringe of hair under the rim of his solar helmet, was ushered out by a clerk.

"Very good, Mr. Starling," the clerk was saying. "We can deliver the order in two weeks."

Rattray gripped my arm. "D'you remember a line under the stamps?" he whispered. "*'Lew Starling would help, if he dared?'*"

"Uh-huh," I said. "We'll make a try for the bird."

The little man reminded me of the *White Rabbit*—you know, in "*Alice*." And sure enough, as he came abreast of us, he was muttering to himself. I made



"The Governor cabled me: 'Miss Parsons dined at Government House two nights since. Very well, and interested in Hope experiments. You must be misinformed.'"

that my excuse: "Sorry, I didn't catch what you said."

He was startled.

"Eh? Oh, I was talking to myself. A foolish habit."

I took a firm grasp on his arm, and steered him into the mouth of an alley—he was too flabbergasted to resist.

"Look here," I said when we were out of sight of the street. "We're here—"

He made a little gesture of resignation. "I know," he answered, almost tranquilly. "On account of Miss Parsons. And there's nothing I'd do to hinder you from taking her out of the damned hell she's living in."

I developed a sneaking liking for the little guy in that moment.

"All right, Gerry," I said. "I think Mr. Starling is going to play ball with us." I turned to him. "But how come a feller like you helps to run this hell?"

"You don't know Mr. Hope," he all but whimpered; "you don't know how evil that man is! He may be crazy, but he has the greatest brain of anyone I ever met. He—he found out I'd been in trouble, and made me choose between serving him, and the—electric chair. I know electricity; I don't want to die that way. And I don't want to be pitched into the feeding-pens by the Nigerians, either. I'm a coward, I'll admit. But there are different ways to die."

AND is Miss Parsons in danger?" challenged Rattray.

Starling considered. "Not immediately, not necessarily. But everyone concerned with Mr. Hope is in danger, sooner or later. That man will make over the world before he's through."

"What's he after?" demanded Rattray.

"The destruction of humanity," Starling answered simply.

"By means of his monsters?"

"By means of them and by other abortions he is working on," amended Starling. "If you could see the giant rats he is breeding! They are as big as cows, and they breed like house-rats. And then there is Ganoo! Even the Nigerians are afraid of Ganoo, although they don't mind casting lots for the annual sacrifice to the monsters."

"What is Ganoo?" I asked him.

"A hybrid—gorilla." Starling shuddered. "The old Christians taught that man could know too much," he continued. "Perhaps they were right. Mr. Hope has devised a means of fertilization and stimulus of the protoplasm by the aid of his Alpha Ray." A tinge of excitement entered his speech. "A gigantic invention, gentlemen. It is his secret; but from conversations with Miss Parsons, who is not cognizant of the entire process, of course, I have gathered that it is a concentrate of a glandular secretion of which science is still ignorant."

"You might say the feller is a giantist," Rattray commented dryly.

"You would not be far wrong," Starling assented. "My employer has exhibited a consistent aberration in that direction. Whatever he does must be on a gigantic scale. Couple with that his obvious conviction that he has not been granted his due by his fellows, and you have the basic clue to his character."

"But if he abolishes all of us, what about himself?" I retorted. "Does this Ganoo care about him?"

Starling shuddered violently.

"Good God, no!" he exclaimed. "If there is anything human about the creature, it is his absolute hatred for his creator, for everything human."

"What do they do with him?" put in Rattray.

"He is chained in a pen on the walk between the Residence—which is Mr. Hope's place—and the laboratories."

I pulled a notebook and pencil from my pocket.

"This residence?" I asked. He sketched deftly an outline of an irregularly shaped island, with a central lagoon, then filled in the detail, what he called the Residence at the northwest tip, a group of bungalows adjacent—in one of which Miss Parsons lived with a negro maid—and a succession of other buildings: power-house, laboratories, animal and reptile houses, barracks for the Nigerians, storage-shacks and so forth.

"And this is Mr. Ravich's house," he added.

"Who is he?" snapped Rattray.

"Dr. Penko Ravich, Mr. Hope's principal assistant. A very brilliant man, as crazy as Mr. Hope."

I ASKED him next about the monsters. "They're a cross between python and crocodile," he explained. "Mr. Hope has a standing offer with every wild-animal collector of repute for the largest possible specimens."

"I know," I said, "and he pays well. But what's the idea about the rats?"

"Mr. Hope's original idea was to produce them as food for the Pycrocosaurii, as he calls the monsters; but he had such unexpected success with them—they are relatively much more exaggerated than the monsters—that he is thinking seriously of making them more adaptable to his general purpose of destruction. He is planning to do much the same thing with grizzly bears, crossing them with another strain to increase their assertiveness and combative instinct."

"What other nice experiments is he making?" I asked.

"A great many, sir. He recently commenced a series with warrior-ants. And he is planning to develop giant pigs. Of course, some of his experiments have been unsuccessful."

"I don't believe he will have any more successes," I said.

Starling's features brightened. "You are planning—er—measures?"

"That is something not to be discussed," Rattray put in sternly.

The little man flushed.

"You may rest assured," he answered, with dignity, "that my last intention is to betray any of this conversation to Mr. Hope. For me to do so would mean the loss of my sanity, if not my death. And while I am afraid of death, I am not afraid of dying, provided it is not as a biological experiment." The flush went out of his face and he emitted a nervous laugh. "Another thing you may be sure of, gentlemen, is that no human being dies uselessly on Barstow's Island."

Rattray was sorry for him, and so was I.

"Quite all right, Mr. Starling," Rattray said. "But we sha'n't take it amiss if you can find an opportunity to let Miss Parsons know we are active in her behalf."

"I shall be delighted to do so, Major," he assented.

"Oh, by the way, I wish also you'd warn Miss Parsons to stay away from the laboratory for the next few days, under any pretense," added Rattray. "Tell her to play sick, if necessary."

"Which reminds me," I suggested, "you too might heed Major Rattray's advice."

He smiled faintly. "My quarters are in the power-house. I shall be at my station. The only remaining excuse I have for self-respect is the discharge of the duties assigned to me."

CHAPTER III

WHILE Bud trotted off to the Customhouse to get pratique and clearance, Gerry and I returned to the yacht-club pier. Captain Chumley-Jones was on the job all right, out alongside the plane with the gas-boat, overseeing the filling of her tanks.

Everything was ready by the time Bud appeared, and our black friend drove his kicker up to the wharf. "I believe you will find all to your satisfaction, gentlemen," was his greeting.

I decided to play a hunch.

"D'you know Barstow's Island?" I shot at him.

He scowled, as he had before. "Certainly, sar. It was formerly a resort of bootleggers. It is now occupied by Mr. Hope, about whom we had some conversation."

"Just why do you dislike Mr. Hope?"

"For one thing, sar, because he has made it impossible for our fishermen, who are sore pressed for good grounds, to work in his vicinity."

"Captain Chumley-Jones," I said, "I can see that you are a man of intelligence—also, I should suppose, a man who can keep his mouth closed, when it is to his own interest." I produced a fifty-dollar bill. "What do you know about Barstow's Island?"

"Very little, sar," he answered promptly, without attempting to take the bill, "except that it is elaborately fortified and guarded. I served in France, sar, and I am judging the situation by what my less experienced friends have told me. It is surrounded by a high concrete wall, which is surmounted by a very high barbed-wire barrier, braced on both sides by iron supports. There are likewise electrified wire barriers offshore. Our fishermen have been fired upon with machine-guns from what one described to me as giant figures on concrete towers."

He checked himself, and I could swear that if it is possible for a black man to flush, a sudden flow of blood darkened his face. "Go on," I encouraged him. He paused and looked away from me, shifting his bare feet awkwardly. "Sar, I am afraid you will laugh at me for a man as ignorant as some of my unfortunate people, who have not been privileged to share my opportunities. But the truth is, gentlemen, there is something appallingly evil on Barstow's, something that is beyond human nature." His voice fell. "Several fishermen have disappeared in that vicinity under circumstances which have filled their friends with terror. Our common people, as you know, are simple and afflicted with superstitions. It is not easy to credit all that they report. But only a man of infinite cruelty could do away with poor fishermen, as Mr. Hope has done."

"What do they report?" I prompted.

"You will not believe me," he said, "but those who have approached the island, and lived to escape, say that it is inhabited by monstrous Things, such as are described in Revelations."

"Why has nobody informed the proper authorities?" asked Rattray.

The black man smiled, sadly this time. "Who would believe the tales of my ignorant people, sar? Moreover, they are afraid to talk to white people."

Rattray shuddered. "Poor Ann," he murmured.

I hauled out another fifty, and gave the two bills to the black man. "You've earned this," I said, "and you can earn more—that is, if you aren't afraid—"

"I would willingly lose my life, sar," he interrupted, "if it would help to remove the terror which is over my people."

"That won't be necessary," I answered. "We may need you here for connections, that's all. Stand by constantly for us. We'll be back in a day or two."

Bud spoke up here. "Say, Captain, what's the small island about thirty miles northwest of Barstow's?"

"You must mean Petty's, sar."

"Is there a harbor we could put the ship down in—and swamp growth to cover it?"

"Certainly, sar. If you will allow me, I will sketch you a map of it. There is a reef at the entrance, but that will not bother you." Rattray gave him a memorandum-book, and he sketched rapidly a very workmanlike outline of the place, elevations, marshes, wooded bits, all indicated. "It was formerly occupied by a group of our fishermen," he added as he handed back the book. "Mr. Hope drove them away."

"A nice companionable guy," said Bud. "Thanks."

We chugged out to the plane and cast off the mooring, with Captain Chumley-Jones' assistance, after Bud had tested the motors.

"You can't beat a good black," Rattray remarked, waving a response to the waterman's parting salute. "I say, do you see what I see?" We were taxying around the stern of the Hope yacht for a clear take-off. The name on it in bold ebony letters was: *Doom*.

"Ganoo the man-monkey frightens me the most. Ganoo looks at me horribly," Ann had written to Rattray.



THE Bahamas strung away behind us, big islands and small ones, blobs of green with silvery beaches around them and sparkling fringes of surf. Once in a while we'd see a scatter of house-roofs on the shores of a lagoon or inlet, more rarely a huddle of boats, either fishermen or spongers. The last third of the flight we observed no signs of life at all. It was still broad daylight when Bud tapped Captain Chumley-Jones' sketch map,—pinned on his navigating-board alongside the chart of the islands,—and pointed at an insignificant patch of green ahead to starboard. "Must be Petty's," he shouted over the racket of the motors.

The lagoon opened up before us, at first no larger than a creek, gradually expanding as we swooped lower out of the blazing sky. The reef across the entrance showed only one break, and that too narrow for any craft above a fishing-sloop. The lagoon itself was about half a mile wide, and maybe a mile and a half long. Bud eased the amphibian onto its surface, and taxied slowly toward a strip of beach shadowed by the inevitable mangroves. The silence of the place was absolute.

Bud produced thermos flasks and sandwiches, and we made ourselves comfortable. As darkness fell Bud switched on the lights.

"Y'know," he said abruptly, "I'm a pretty sound guy at night-flying. I've been studying this-here chart, and I don't see any reason why I couldn't pick up Barstow's in the dark,—matter of fact, there's a full moon tonight,—cut the motors and drop down onto the central lake from altitude. We ought to be able to get a quick look at these Hope monsters, and beat it before anything happened. No time wasted, see, and we'd know what we had to tackle."

"I'm for it," Rattray returned, "if you aren't too tired, Bud. You've been doing all the work."

"Let's go," I decided.

We spent the two hours before moon-rise fiddling with the motors, overhauling

the battery and testing the searchlight mounted on top of the cabin. For some reason, I even unpacked the camera and slung it by the strap from my seat, just behind Bud's. Rattray was to sit beside him, with the Tommy-gun.

The moon came up about eight-thirty. It was the biggest moon I'd ever seen, and it lighted the lagoon so completely that Bud didn't need the searchlight in taking off. He spent the first half-hour circling the island for altitude. When he was satisfied, he leveled off and pointed the ship's nose southeast, the only lights the shielded bulbs over the instrument-board and the chart-table.

"Tchkk!" Bud grunted presently; and there before us in the silvery light, which made the ocean seem black, was a darker oblong mass, splotted in its center by a spot of lighter hue. The nose of the plane tilted downward sharply, and the roar of the motors was stilled.

The propellers flipped and died, but the whine of the wind in the wing-struts was like angry voices in the night. The ship was dropping at a good two hundred and fifty miles an hour. Barstow's seemed to be rising up to meet us. But at five hundred feet Bud checked the glide. As we floated in from the sea, I saw in the moonlight a group of massive buildings, concrete walls glistening white, a glow of electricity. We dropped lower, at diminished speed. I had an impression of lofty walls, strange tenuous structures. Then we were over, and Bud slapped the pontoons down on the surface of the lake.

IF you ask me what happened next, I can only answer that it was the nearest to an honest-to-God nightmare I ever experienced. The sensation I received was of a vast and incomprehensible terror—and this before I had really seen anything. What actually first caught my eye was an immense headless figure straddling a concrete tower on the right. It was twenty feet tall if it was an inch. There was a texture of wires around it. It had a metallic glint. Then, as the amphibian rocked to a stop on the water, we all of us heard a tremendous splashing which made the commotion we had created in landing seem like the patting of a child's hand in a wash-basin.

Immediately, too, there was a deafening outburst of sound which cannot be reproduced in any human language, a peculiar hissing boom, with an undertone of ruthless ferocity that was unearthly.



Bud swore, and flashed on the searchlight, his hand reaching for the controls involuntarily. "Dear God," muttered Rattray. I was too terrified for speech. The lake around us was swarming with monstrous shapes. Believe me, *monstrous* is the word. Great scaly backs and long serpent-necks, with inexpressibly evil flat heads and gaping, long-toothed jaws. A horrible head reared up out of the water by my window, trying to thrust itself inside the cabin as Bud yelled: "Camera, Terry!" Somehow, in two movements I had the camera focused, and exploded a flashlight bulb. I had a vision of deep-set lidded eyes, greenish and wicked. It reared back from the flashlight, and Bud yelled: "Shoot, fellers! Here we go."

The motors sputtered and roared. We began to move. Rattray's Tommy-gun was stuttering. I grabbed my elephant-gun, and emptied the two barrels at the head as it swayed toward me again. It let out another of those hissing booms, this time with a hint of agony, and towered up above the wing, weaving frenziedly for a moment before it toppled over with a churning of the surface that almost swamped the ship. Over Bud's shoulder I had a glimpse of an immense thing directly in our path, its scaly back stretching off into the darkness beyond the area illuminated by the searchlight, its head brandishing at us. Rattray leaned out of the co-pilot's window, and fired a burst. It lashed back, hissing and booming. I felt the ship lift. Rattray fired again. We just cleared it—indeed, its head thumped one of the pontoons. If it had hit a wing!

I LOOKED out my window, and saw a second of the headless metal giants astraddle of a concrete tower. It was turning, slowly, methodically. Somewhere a siren was wailing. A web of searchlights came on from every side, prying and searching. Bud cursed again, and switched off his own headlight. Machine-guns chattered, and a larger gun went off with a crash. "Sounds like anti-aircraft," shouted Rattray.

"Believe you me," yelled Bud, "this place is anti-everything!"

Well, I was shaking. To get myself in hand, I stuck my head out the window and looked down. We were passing over the group of buildings at the north end of the island. They were ablaze with lights. I could see figures running about; and the machine-guns kept on hammer-

ing; and the big gun was evidently firing as fast as they could throw the shells into it. The lake, too, was belted with lights, and I could tell by the jets of light that machine-guns were firing from the encircling towers. By God, those robots were mechanical machine-gunners!

RATTRAY was fumbling at a whisky bottle, and I was glad to see that his hand was as shaky as mine.

"H-how big were they, d'you think?" he asked.

"Some of 'em were over seventy feet," Bud answered. "That's judging by comparison with the ship."

"I wouldn't have believed in them if I hadn't seen 'em," I said. "D'you both realize we've just emerged from a reproduction of the womb of time?"

"I don't care about that," retorted Bud. "But I'm going back there to get a topographical shot of the whole layout. You fellers are crazy to think you can do any real harm to 'em with your toy guns. What they rate is demolition bombs."

I remembered the camera. "I believe I caught a shot of one of 'em," I said. "We'll turn the lavatory into a darkroom after we land. . . . Hi, here we are! Good old Petty's!"

With Bud's help, I had no difficulty in making a legible print of the picture shot, and if my hand trembled as I held it under the cabin lamp for inspection, the other two were a trifle green around the gills. It's the best snapshot I ever made. Anybody who says it's a fake can figure on taking as hefty a beating as I'm capable of giving him. That's a promise.

"What d'you make of it, Terry?" Bud said. "What is it? Where did Hope get the critters?"

"He didn't get 'em," I answered. "He created 'em. Technically, they're re-creations of a type of amphibious reptile which hasn't existed for millions of years. How he did it stumps me. Why, they're a species of dinosaur! They'd swamp civilization if they were ever afforded a chance to breed."

Rattray's jaw tightened. "We'd best notify the Colonial authorities," he said.

"And find ourselves in a mess of red-tape for trying to interfere with an interesting biological experiment?" I retorted. "Or even push Hope into releasing 'em? After the worst we could do to him, he'd still be able to go off, and construct another secret plant."

"Right," approved Bud. "It looks to me as though this job was up to us."

"We've got to do it, and we've got to do it fast."

"How?" challenged Rattray.

"Demolition bombs, like I told you. I'll wipe that place out, if you say the word."

Rattray whitened. "But Miss Parsons—Ann?" he objected.

Bud looked at me. "Of course, Gerry," I said, "we'll do all we can for her, but it looks as though Bud has the straight of it. Would you be willing to let Hope inflict the harm he can for the sole purpose of saving her? And would she want you to? If Hope isn't abolished, I hate to think of her fate."

Rattray walked the length of the cabin twice. "I expect you two have the correct attitude," he said at last, his face gaunt. "But if there's any chance—"

"We'll do all we can," I promised. "Be sure of that."

"You bet we will," endorsed Bud. "Don't you worry, Gerry. I used to be a good bomber. And I've got a peach of a plan. Tell you about it later. The objective now is a dose of shut-eye. We'll have to hop off at dawn. The anti-aircraft stuff at Barstow's is going to be fierce under the best of conditions."

CHAPTER IV

THE sun was a brazen slit on the eastern horizon as Bud lifted the plane over the reef. He swung her due south, well out of sight of Barstow's, and after cruising for about twenty minutes headed east, then north in a bee-line for the island. Diving at a slant, I should judge we weren't more than two hundred feet up at the moment we coasted over the southeastern tip, which looked to be a scrub forest and swamp. Bud reached for the switch which started the topographical, and I leaned out my window to see what I could of the infernal place by daylight.

The siren was going, and a puff of smoke jetted from a gun-emplacement by the harbor at the northwestern end where the buildings stood. And so help me, those beastly robots on the wall towers around the lake were rotating ponderously, exactly as I'd seen one of them do it the night before. Men were running along the wall outside the wire, some of them shooting at us with light machine-guns. The monsters were in a huddle on a beach over by the right bank of the lake, except for two that were chasing

other critters about the size of cows; as we found out afterward, they were the giant rats Hope bred as fodder for his favored pets. This was the only chance I ever had to observe the monsters out of the water. They were a queer combination of python and alligator, with more traits of alligator than snake. They had legs like an alligator's, but longer in proportion to their size. As for that, one of them must have been at least a hundred feet long, scaly back and tail and elongated serpent neck, topped by a massive scale-plated head, flat, wedge-shaped and incredibly ugly. They traveled very fast.

OF COURSE, I missed a lot—for one of the headless robots suddenly tilted backward, and a bullet pinged through the window behind me, which was disturbing. (The robots, as we afterward learned, were operated by radio control. They had two functions: to repel curious outsiders, and to discipline the monsters, which occasionally became aggressive, perhaps in the breeding season—I was not clear on this point.) When I poked my head out again, we were over the group of buildings, a dozen large ones, a wireless mast which reached to our altitude and a very sturdy pier on the harbor shore. A complete establishment; and if you could forget the horror of the lake, a peaceful-seeming, efficient establishment.

"Want to go back?" hollered Bud, switching off the camera.

A shell whistled past, and burst a quarter-mile ahead. Machine-guns were drumming crazily. I could imagine the turmoil in the lake.

"Not for me," I confessed.

"Oh, quite," agreed Rattray.

"O. K." Bud yelled. "Terry, whether you like it or not, I'm going to run the rest of this show. See that wireless mast? That means Hope will have heard about our two calls before we reach Nassau. Being what he is, he'll take measures. He must have noticed the ship yesterday. He'll recognize us when we slope in. I don't want to be impounded by the Colonial people, and tied up with some suit for trespass.

"My plan is to drop you two as soon as our nigger accomplice can manage it. Then I'll hop off for a naval base I know of where I have a couple of buddies there, who will be delighted to give me illicit and dishonest help, such as loaning me a couple of loads of demolition bombs, and the use of the lab to develop

the topo film. I'll ferry the bombs to Petty's, and cable you when the job's done. In the meantime you arrange with Admiral Chumley-Jones to hire you a boat with power, fast as possible, run out at night, and we'll rendezvous in the lagoon—as you make the entrance, fire two shots, dash, single shot, else I'll pump the Tommy-gun into you. Any quizzes?"

Ratray said: "If I may intrude, old top, how do you propose to release the bombs?"

"I'll wangle help," snapped Bud, "from the Station mechanics to rig a vent from the cabin floor between the pontoons. It would take too long to install regular bomb-racks; and anyway, I couldn't be sure how the ship would ride—she wasn't built for that sort of thing."

"It sounds like a workable plan, Bud," I had to admit. "But keep your trap shut about Barstow's. Remember, we're working for the *Dispatch*. You'll have to tell your buddies some yarn about doing a job for spiggoty revolutionaries."

"I won't tell 'em a thing," Bud retorted. "I won't need to. I'll tell 'em I have to have the murder-powders for entirely honorable but illegal reasons!"

COMING in over the house-roofs of Nassau, we saw Hope's *Doom* still at anchor in the harbor, while a power-dory was running out from the Yacht Club pier. Indeed, Captain Chumley-Jones was waiting for us by the mooring. As he caught hold of the right wing, "Captain, sar," he exclaimed, "did you know there are holes in your airplane?"

"Wouldn't be surprised," Bud blithely answered. "The old gal rates 'em. Come on, you fellers, get moving. Take a look at the yacht."

One hasty glance told me a launch was being hastily manned.

"Catch," I adjured our black friend, and hurled him Ratray's bag and mine. "After you, Gerry. Good luck, Bud!"

"Happy landings," returned Bud, his fingers on the motor switches—the propellers hadn't stopped turning. "You'll hear from me. Be two-three days, anyway."

Out of sheer cussedness he hopped the plane directly over the Hope launch, frightening its occupants off their course. We reached the pier well ahead of them.

"I don't want to talk to those people yet," I told our black friend. "Come with us. We need a taxi, a good hotel and baths and shaves."

"You may leave everything to me, gentlemen," he assured us. And in a quarter of an hour he had us comfortably housed, drinks ordered and our bags opened for unpacking. I could see he was curious, but he asked no questions, which made me like him all the more.

"Your people weren't exaggerating what they told you about Barstow's," I said, handing him my snapshot.

His eyes almost popped out of his head. "Oh, sar," he exclaimed. "The Lord God never created such a Thing! The man should be destroyed, sar."

"Would you like to throw in with us?"

"If I can be of any assistance to you, gentlemen," he returned, "it will be my humble duty to do so."

THE telephone rang. "Mr. Hope is calling, sir," the switchboard reported.

I covered the mouthpiece. "Satan is downstairs, Gerry. Let him up?" Ratray nodded. "All right," I answered. "Send him along." And to the negro: "I think, Captain, it would be just as well if you waited next door. No reason why this feller should know too much."

"Very good, sar."

Captain Chumley-Jones slipped out of the room, his bare feet soundless on the floor. A moment later an imperious rap battered the door.

"Come in," I called.

The door was flung open, and Hope's giant figure towered to the lintel. He glowered at us, his eyes bloodshot, a pulse beating in his bulbous forehead. Then he strode in.

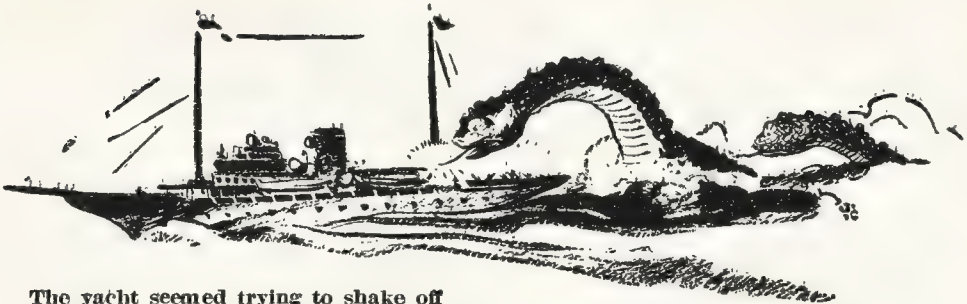
"Close the door," I barked. He hesitated, slammed it to. "That's better," I said. "There's such a quality as courtesy, even in egomaniacs."

He ignored the crack. "I've heard of you," he snarled.

"That's right," I assented cheerfully. "I got you a couple of swell pythons for your devil work."

He ignored that, too. "I'm not a man to trifle with, O'Malley. By what right have you presumed to trespass upon my property? I shall take immediate action! I shall report you to the Colonial authorities. There are laws governing such outrages. I have an understanding—"

"Oh, yeh?" I cut him off, and tossed my snapshot on the table in front of him. "Just what would the Colonial authorities say after they saw that? What's the chances of having the West India squadron called in to blow your little hell to shreds?"



The yacht seemed trying to shake off the pursuit—an impossible course.

He glared down at the picture, made a move as if to tear it. I had him covered in the fraction of a second.

"None of that," I snapped. "I have the original film, anyhow. But no rough stuff, Satan."

The blood surged up into his bull-neck. "Do you realize I am conducting experiments of vital importance to science?" he demanded.

I said: "And what about humanity?"

"To hell with humanity," he growled. "What has humanity done to justify itself? Humanity is finished."

"We-ell," I answered him, "it would be a matter of only one bullet out of this gun to finish you, Satan."

He wasn't afraid, I'll say that for him. "You can't frighten me," he retorted. "A man who commits murder on British territory—"

"And what about a man who commits kidnaping—and worse—on British territory?" Rattray put in for the first time.

Hope turned squarely toward the Englishman, a sneer on his face. "You are English?" he said. "One Major Rattray, I suppose? This may interest you."

He flipped an envelope onto the table. Rattray walked over, opened and read it, with cheek-muscles taut.

"A lie," was Gerry's comment. "What do you think, Terry?"

I took it from him. The handwriting was the same as that under the stamps of the envelopes addressed to him. Written on the yacht's note-paper, it said:

Dear Gerry:

You must be insane. Surely you received Sir Austin's wire. You have done great harm already by your ill-considered actions. I am in the midst of experiments of the greatest importance, experiments which must affect the whole course of life. It is an opportunity which few people have ever enjoyed, and for which I am deeply indebted to Mr. Hope. His patronage is an honor, as any scientist would tell you.

Please go away. You are only bothering me. I cannot possibly see you in your present state of mind. Oh, Gerry, you have hurt me terribly. Have you none of the unselfish love you promised me? Doesn't my career mean anything to you? Can't you trust me? I have explained everything to you many times. There is no point in repeating it. Go away, I beg you, and if you really care, wait until I have finished this wonderful undertaking with Mr. Hope, who has treated me with respect and a confidence I wish you could appreciate.

If you do care, you will understand. If you don't understand, what can I say? Don't make me feel I have made a mistake in loving you.

Ann."

"Sounds fishy," I said to Rattray. "Forged?"

He shook his head. "Her handwriting. But it doesn't make sense. Compulsion of some kind, I'd say."

"Nonsense," roared Hope. "Miss Parsons—one of the most intelligent young biologists it has been my fortune to work with—is prepared to go into court, if necessary to restrain your persecution of her, and support what she has written."

Rattray smiled slightly. "Now I know you are lying," he said. Hope turned upon him, and Rattray continued, without raising his voice: "I have you covered, too."

Hope's head bent forward, quivering on its thick neck, with an effect uncannily reptilian.

"Threats? Many people have threatened me. None has lived to be happy about it. I don't intend to waste time with you. You have perpetrated two trespasses upon my property, and attacked my employees with gunfire, destroyed one of my experiments. If it happens again, if it is attempted again, I shall take adequate measures for my protection, including an appeal to—"

"Wait a moment," I stopped him, raising my own voice. "What do you think the Colonial people will say when they see the topographical film of your island we made this morning? Or this—" I pointed to the print on the table—"beautiful exhibit? When we bear witness to the fact that you have set up, not an experimental laboratory, but a fortification, surrounding a little hunk of hell, on the King's territory?"

"Do it," he invited. "The only inconvenience you will cause me will be to expose to the admiration of every scientist alive, work I have wished to keep secret." His voice had a resonance to it which echoed through the room. I realized that the man believed in himself superbly, like the apostle of a faith—a faith in destruction, in annihilation, but still a faith. "Your League of Nations! Your petty wars and bickerings!" He laughed raucously. "I intend to abolish it all—and all of you. Do you two petty pups think seriously that anyone will prefer your wretched, unformed opinions to those of the man who has brought back the saurians to the world, who has set the centuries back by eons, who has established a re-creation of evolution?"

It was damned impressive—histrionic, maybe, but impressive. Personally, I was glad when Rattray, entirely unperturbed, crossed to the door and opened it: "If you don't mind, Mr. Satan. The air is a bit foul."

Hope glared, his mouth a cruel threat.

"You'll both beg for death before I'm through with you," he boomed. And he stalked out magnificently.

CHAPTER V

DID you ever see a black man turn gray? That was the complexion of Captain Chumley-Jones. "Gentlemen," he said, "why didn't you shoot him?"

But Rattray smiled understandingly. "Y'know, there's such a crime as murder—under the law, Captain," he answered.

I said: "You've heard enough to get yourself a set-up of the situation, Captain. We aim to blow that place off the map, and that's the problem Bud, our pilot, has to take care of. In the meantime, we need help."

"You have only to suggest what I can do, gentlemen," he answered.

I told him about the boat we'd need.

"I have a cousin," he said, "whose brother was killed by Mr. Hope's guards.

He owns a rum-runner. It can exceed thirty knots an hour. He will be glad to enter into such an engagement, sar."

"Swell," I agreed. "You fix it up with him, and tell him to bring along three or four of his friends as a covering force."

"There will be no difficulty about that, gentlemen," affirmed our ally. "My cousin and his crew would welcome a chance to fight those black heathen, and the Beast of the Apocalypse himself."

CAPTAIN CHUMLEY-JONES reported at breakfast that the yacht had sailed. Afterward he escorted us to the harbor, where we made the formal acquaintance of his cousin, Captain Melancthon Hardigraves, three other grinning darkies, and the *Stardust*, a battered but seaworthy forty-footer, with amazing stowage for her size, and a motor that ticked like clockwork.

For want of anything else to do, we ran offshore a few miles, and idled away the early afternoon trying for tarpon. We didn't have a strike, but we helped the negroes haul in a tidy mess of table fish. Returning to the hotel, we found a radio from Bud, sent via Ruacoa, at the southeast tip of Cuba: "EVERYTHING O K MEET ME TOMORROW MORNING IF POSSIBLE WHAT A NAVY WHAT A NAVY."

"My word, you *are* a lawless people," gasped Rattray. "Fancy the R. N. lending itself to such a bobbery! What do they do about the indents?"

"Use American ingenuity," I told him loftily. "We'd better dig up our peerless pal, and warn him to gas the boat for a night run."

We found Captain Chumley-Jones without any difficulty in a very decorous negro resort, the Loaves & Fishes, on the waterfront. He undertook to collect his cousin, and meet us at eight o'clock at Poulter's Wharf. We occupied the intervening time by laying in an ample supply of drinkables and foodstuffs.

I paid the hotel bill while Rattray supervised the shifting of our plunder into a cab. All serene. It was a quarter of an hour's drive to Poulter's Wharf, which showed in the glare of the cab's headlights as a rickety structure, the lank shadow of the *Stardust* lying athwart its end.

Captain Hardigraves had his motor turning, bow and stern men ready to cast off. "Appy to see yoh, gentlemen. Please to take yoh hease. We will conduc' yoh safe to Petty's, after which we will again be at yoh command."

In two minutes the *Stardust* was chugging out the harbor.

The rhythm of the motor as speed was increased, the purring of the water along the knifelike hull, the pulse of the vibration, were as soothing as a cradle-song. I thought I hadn't slept an hour when Hardigraves twitched my foot.

The sun was striking level across a quiet sea, its rays reflected from a long burnished silver-and-green island two or three miles to starboard. Rattray was standing naked in the cockpit, one of the crew sluicing buckets of salt water over him. And by the time we were dressed, Captain Chumley-Jones appeared with hot coffee, and a dish of fried red snappers. We ate leisurely, without talking. It was as if we were trying instinctively to wring all the peace we could out of that serene morning, foreseeing the horrors and turmoil which should come later.

It was along toward ten o'clock when we picked up Petty's Island, and Hardigraves headed in for the gap in the reef. I remembered Bud's instructions, and fired my pistol in the air, two shots fast, pause, one shot. And sure enough, as we slid in through the bottle-neck of the lagoon, there was the amphibian at anchor. "One thing we don't have to worry about," I said gratefully.

Bud climbed out on a wing, and dropped to the *Stardust's* bow. "I could do with a cup of coffee royal," he remarked. "Hi, Captain, glad to see you and your boy-friends. Well, gang?"

"All set?" I asked.

He nodded, squatting on the rail. "Sure. Got a swell load of eggs aboard, another cached in the bushes yonder."

Gerry Rattray said, with exaggerated respect: "I wonder, sir, if you would mind informing us exactly how your accomplices wangled this stunt for you?"

Bud gave him a wide-toothed grin. "I never asked 'em, Gerry. If there's ever an inquiry or what-have-you, I'm just dumb, see? All I know, between us three, is that I went to Heinie Dugan, who has Ordnance, and told him what I needed, a little bit more, too, as to the circumstances. Heinie wanted to lend me a squadron of bombers, but I gave him a lecture on international law."

THEN Chumley-Jones appeared with our cups of coffee. Bud set his down with a sigh. "And that's that. I could stand another. O. K.? Good! And now to business." He lit a cigarette. "With the load she's carrying, the ship is

going to be a job to lift. I've got to leave one of you on this hooker, and I think it had better be Gerry. . . . Hold on, Gerry! No offense. But I've worked with Terry before. Also, one of us should be on hand to brace these boys, in case anything goes wrong. In the first place, the load ashore must be shifted aboard here soon as we return, which will be a matter only of minutes, you realize. And when we take off for the second flight, I want the base detail to follow us, and be in a position to do a rescue job, if we're shot down, and help in any mopping up that may have to be done. We'll need to land to find Gerry's girl. And that may very well mean a scrap. 'Tisn't likely we'll be able to abolish all the vermin, from the air. Clear?"

"Quite," Rattray answered steadily. "You're right, Bud."

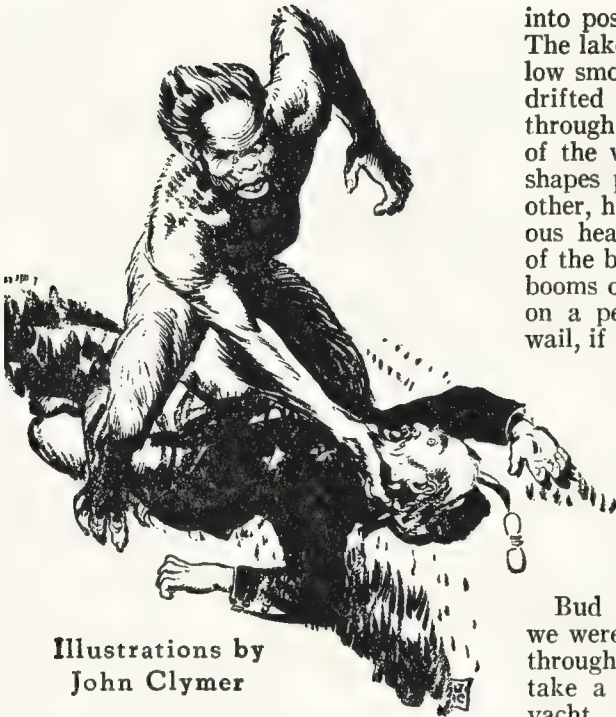
"Suppose you take a look at this map," I said to Bud.

He ran an expert eye over its details. "Good," he pronounced. "We'll take the power-house first, eh? Put those robots out of business! Then next, we'll clean up the monsters," Bud continued. I pointed out to him Ann Parsons' bungalow and the Residence. "Yes," he assented, "we'd better give 'em a wide berth. Oh, by the way, Gerry, there's a box of grenades in the cache. They're for your crowd. Let's go."

IT was necessary to run the amphibian the length of the lagoon before she lifted. But after that she climbed slowly. The cabin floor was so cluttered with bombs there was barely room for me to work in by the hatch opening into the chute. "You won't be able to do any fancy ranging," Bud yelled to me from the controls. "I'll tip you when to drop 'em."

The day was steaming hot, with a haze over the land, which was all to the good for our purpose. The wind was light and variable, but not squally. It must have been about eleven o'clock. Neither of us thought to check the actual time.

The plane wasn't doing better than one hundred and fifty, with the motors wide open; but it didn't seem any time at all before the irregular green oblong of Barstow's Island, with the central lake shining up at us like an evil eye, showed on the horizon. Bud was holding the ship below a thousand feet, partly because of the load, mostly to make the targets easier to reach. We were still a couple of miles away when the gun by the wharf commenced to wham at us.



Illustrations by
John Clymer

I had the hatch off, and a hundred-pounder ready to slide in the chute—some job to handle that bomb! And mind you, I could see mighty little, except directly beneath me, waves tossing, the yacht with figures scurrying over her decks, and—“Chuck it,” hollered Bud.

There was a terrific detonation. The ship bounced; Bud straightened her and banked. “Coming back,” he called. “Fifty-pounder this time. Ready? . . . Chuck it!”

A second detonation. Watching through the chute, I saw clouds of black and yellow smoke obscuring the ground. “We got ‘em,” Bud yelled. “Hit an oil-tank. Now we’ll try for that gun. Ready? Fifty-pounder.” He swooped lower in a steep banking turn. “Chuck it,” he ordered. “No good,” he announced as the smoke lifted. “But you hit some joint alongside of it. Now for the lake.”

I wrestled a hundred-pounder to the edge of the chute. Machine-guns were chattering crazily, but there wasn’t time to think of them. The lake showed beneath, a pair of vast scaly backs. “Chuck it,” Bud shouted. On the heels of the detonation rose a confused chorus of those awful hissing booms, hysterically ferocious. “Keep piling ‘em,” shouted Bud. He was banking in as narrow a circle as the big ship could manage. I worked furiously, shoving bombs down the chute as fast as I could trundle them

into position. The noise was appalling. The lake was blanketed with murky yellow smoke, and the fumes of picric acid drifted up to us. Once, when I peered through a rift, I had an instant’s glimpse of the water seething and boiling, huge shapes plunging about, striking at each other, heaving up snaky necks and hideous heads. And in between explosions of the bombs, the air rang to the hissing booms of the monsters, which had taken on a peculiar mournful note, almost a wail, if such a thing were possible.

With blood dripping from his crooked, hairy fingers, Ganoo whirled on Ravich; he finished the Serbian even quicker than he had Mr. Satan.

Bud started to climb, and I realized we were heading out to sea. “Can’t see through the smoke,” he hollered. “We’ll take a crack at the barracks and the yacht. Boy, we plastered ‘em! Notice the robots are quiet? No more power!”

The gun by the wharf was firing again, but the lightening of our load made the amphibian more agile to handle, and Bud zigzagged confusingly.

“This is the barracks,” he called. “Give ‘em a hundred-pounder . . . Chuck it!” The jar of the explosion shook the ship, but Bud wasn’t satisfied. “That’s some building,” he yelled. “Only cracked it a little. Give ‘em another.” We banked, and went over it a second time, and as I looked down I saw swarms of antlike figures, some sprawled on the ground, some scurrying in every direction, a few firing up at us. “Chuck it,” he yelled. The explosion was double in intensity. I knew we had hit a magazine. “Oh, boy, oh, boy,” hollered Bud. “There’s a fire, and it’s going to spread.”

I scrambled to my feet to peer out. There was a bank of smoke completely blanketing the lake, but I saw that one of the robots, high above it, was half-wrenched from its stand. Sheets of flame enveloped the barracks, and apparently a storehouse alongside had caught fire. A number of boats were shoving off from the wharf, and a plume of smoke from the yacht’s funnel indicated she was raising steam. That gave me an idea.

“Forget the yacht, Bud,” I called. “The more of ‘em she takes aboard, the better it will be for us when we land. We can take care of her afterward.”

"O. K.," he agreed. "We'll pitch into the laboratory—but try for that gun again." This, as a shell hurtled past.

I had a squint at the plume of smoke near the end of the wharf, went back to the chute and hauled a fifty-pounder to the edge. Bud had depressed the ship's nose; we were coming down in a steep slant. I was watching for that smoke-plume; the second it was visible through the chute, I dropped the bomb before Bud could speak. It wasn't a direct hit, we discovered afterward, but it struck so close that the gun was dismounted and most of the crew were done in.

THE laboratory was a long low building set among plantings of palms and shrubbery. Adjacent to it were the pens of the giant rats. The firing for the moment was very helter-skelter, inaccurate. Bud dropped to five hundred feet, and even throttled to half-power. I got two hits, one with a fifty-pounder on the pens. "You oughter see 'em scamper, Terry," Bud yelled.

"Are they loose?"

"The ones that can stand."

I didn't like that, but recollected there must be plenty of Nigerians left on the island to take care of them.

I looked out a window again. The flames had spread from the barracks to a second storehouse. The smoke bank over the lake was shredding apart. A herd of the rats were trotting toward the wharf, under fire of a knot of the Nigerians, who presently broke in panic and swarmed into a third storehouse. A gun boomed, and I looked behind us. The yacht had maneuvered around so as to bring her bow piece to bear. It spurted flame, and the shell burst in front of us with a concussion which almost turned us over.

"Drop a hundred-pounder on that feller, Terry," Bud shouted. "I'll come up on his stern." The amphibian banked heavily, teetered on one wing and came gradually to an even keel. We buzzed across the mouth of the harbor, turned sharply, and at Bud's command, I slid a bomb down the chute. It wasn't a hit, but the underwater concussion didn't do the yacht any good. As the smoke cleared, we saw she was lurching clumsily with a list to port. By the time we had circled and returned for another crack at her, she had come about and was heading out to sea.

"Holy mackerel, four hands round!" gasped Bud. "Lookit, Terry, lookit!"

Above the smoke-blanket rolling in from the lake loomed a writhing neck and a great flat evil head, swaying from side to side. And while we stared, the thing evidently came to a decision. Its immense body was dragged forward at the grotesque waddle its kind affected, and it started at an amazing pace toward the feeding-pens on the lake shore.

"Oh, damn," I said. "The wire must be down. Come on, Bud, step on it."

A machine-gun racketed below us, and the monster paused, scratched at a flank with a broad clawed paw, and angled its head around as if to snap at a persistent fly. Then it proceeded on its way, disappearing in a mass of trees between the flaming laboratory and the feeding-pens.

"We *have* done it," Bud yelled. "O. K., Terry, I'll give you the word." He slanted down toward the pens, and the roar of the motors must have attracted the thing's attention, for its head poked up from the greenery. "Chuck it!"

I slid a fifty-pounder into the chute. *Boom!* The head writhed up again, twisting viciously. The tremendous bulk reared on its hind-legs, clawing at the air, the mouth gaping wide. Trees were tumbling right and left as it flung itself about.

"The lake," shouted Bud. "Give 'em all you got!"

He circled the lake, and crisscrossed it, and I dropped the remaining bombs as fast as I could—my arms and shoulders ached. The smoke-clouds banked thicker than they had before. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of a gigantic shape threshing in the seething water. I saw a robot that had tumbled from its tower headlong across the wire barrier—there was a gap, surely. The reek of picric acid mingled with chemical fumes from the burning laboratory and storehouses, and a horrible musky odor. We were so near the water that I could detect through the chute the mangled carcasses that heaved about in it, and streaks of gore clotting the muddy surface.

"All out," I shouted, and Bud shot the plane upward so fast I pitched over on my back.

"No time to waste," he yelled. "There'll be hell to pay down there before we can stow another load."

BUD pointed the amphibian's nose in a bee-line for Petty's Island. Barstow's was spouting smoke and flame like a volcano—evidently the bombs had ignited not only oil stores, but inflammable

chemicals. The yacht was standing off-shore, eight or ten miles eastward, moving sluggishly, if at all.

Bud was driving the plane like a demon. We settled on the lagoon in less than ten minutes, and the *Stardust* ran alongside and nuzzled our dripping pontoons. Her decks were covered with bombs, all ranged shipshape for transference. Rattray, more excited than I'd ever seen him, called: "We heard you! What luck?"

"We've no time for chit-chat," Bud snapped. "Hurry, Gerry. The job's only half done. Soon as we're clear, push after us. Be needing you. Hell to pay—one monster loose—rats all over the place."

"We'll not lose any time," Rattray assured him grimly.

THE negroes, silent for once, slung the eggs to us as fast as we could take them. With the last fifty-pounder in place, Bud leaned out the door. "Have your grehades ready, Gerry," he said. "The yacht's run off a few miles eastward—watch for her. Watch for monsters, too. The barrier's down. Maybe more than one is loose. I think we scragged that one, but—watch! And push for all you're worth."

"We'll be hard after you," Rattray answered. And the negroes raised a cheer: "Huzzah, huzzah, huzzah! We comin', sars."

The *Stardust* was traveling at a pretty clip out of the lagoon as we took off. Bud sat back at the controls with a grunt of weariness. "Pour us a drink, Terry," he said. "Betcher we'll be needing it." I gave him six fingers neat, which he drank with one hand. "I'm going to have a look first at the yacht," he said. "She might be troublesome for Gerry's crowd."

We raised her in about five minutes, and Bud let out a yell which brought me stumbling through the tiers of bombs to his side.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "Just look!"

The yacht was definitely heading out to sea away from the island. But she wasn't alone. One of the monsters was thrashing up astern of her, and a second was approaching her from the starboard quarter. I heard faintly the unmistakable drumming of machine-guns. She obviously couldn't use her three-inch piece without turning around, and her people seemed bent on trying to shake off the pursuit—an impossible course.

While I watched, the thing astern poked its head over the rail, flailing back and forth like a battering-ram. It caught a purchase on a deckhouse with its jaws, reared out of the water and clamped its forelegs on the deck and wriggled aboard.

The yacht settled visibly by the stern. The machine-guns kept clamoring, but all they seemed to accomplish was to madden the monster; and its mate, reaching the starboard quarter, tried the same trick. Their ugly heads clashed together over the deck-house, which crumpled like a cardboard-box, and the second one made use of the diversion to swarm the side. I thought the *Doom* would capsize, but she righted gradually; and the Pycrocs, after snapping amiably at each other, sent their snaky necks darting along the decks, apparently picking off the crew. This only lasted a brief interval. As we hovered, the first one knocked the funnel overside, and the second bit off half the flying-bridge.

"Get busy," rapped Bud. "We ought to be able to do a triple job here with one egg."

I yanked up the trap, and had a hundred-pounder poised when Bud called: "Ready? I'm going as low as I dare. . . . Chuck it!" I'll say he was low! As the bomb whirled down, one of those heads lashed up within ten feet of the chute's vent. The detonation was stupendous, and it near pitched us on our beam-ends. Bud was wrestling with the controls as though they were human. I thought we were going into the sea, but somehow he regained control, and by the time I had reached a window there was nothing left of the yacht but a mess of wreckage dotted with hunks of Pycroc and a flickering scum of oil.

"*Fini!*" yawned Bud.

ON Barstow's, all the buildings between the wharf and the laboratory, and the laboratory and the barracks were blazing. The trees and shrubbery were burning too, and I noticed with some anxiety that the flames were licking through the plantations south of the Residence. There were no signs of life, except there. The rats had vanished, but there was nothing mysterious about that: as we came over the lake, where the smoke was thinning, we sighted a pack of them feasting on disabled Pycrocs twitching in the shallows. Bud dropped to a hundred feet, and I spilled a big egg that abolished the lot of them and bounced us until the struts squeaked.

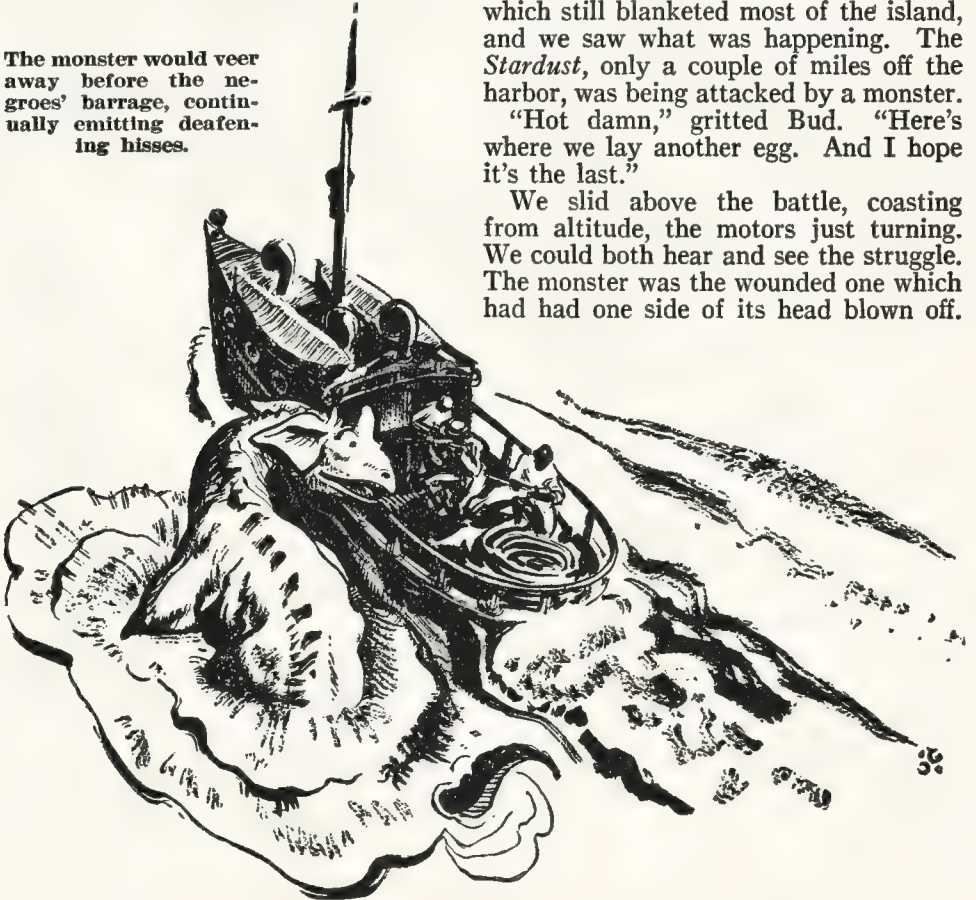
The lake was a shambles. One Pycroc, with part of its head gone, was swimming around in a circle. A second, minus its tail, was crawling through a breach in the barrier. We fixed it with a fifty-pounder; and in doing so, Bud discovered a third, a mile offshore and headed for Petty's Island. He took after it full-throttle. That critter was smart. It saw us coming, and dived, back-tracking underwater; but Bud could follow it the way we used to follow subs off Flanders. I dropped a fifty-pounder, which missed, but the thing came topside in a dither, leaping half out of the water to strike at us.

"'Nother try, Terry," called Bud.

We angled back, and this time, on his signal, I beamed the Pycroc amidships. The sharks were already working on it as we circled through the smoke to make certain of the kill.

Bud headed for the island, and I stood up to rest my back. It was no joke, tossing those eggs. In a regular bomber, of course, you have 'em slung in racks below the under-carriage, and all you need to do is to pull a lever to release 'em. What I was doing was real work.

The monster would veer away before the negroes' barrage, continually emitting deafening hisses.



The first circumstance that caught our attention in the lake was the absence of the wounded monster which had been swimming in circles. "Must have sunk," opined Bud. "Plant two fifties and a big one down the center line, Terry." We roiled the water until it spouted geysers of mud, but nothing rose except fragments of Pycroc. So, giving no more thought to it, we cruised northwest over the settlement, dropping a bomb wherever the destruction wasn't complete.

"Hold on," Bud yelled finally. "I want to save something for an emergency. We'll have a look at this Residence."

HOPE'S house was a two-story building surrounding three sides of a grassy forecourt, the grounds handsomely planted. I marked two machine-guns on the roof, but no life in evidence, except several men who were spraying smoldering shrubbery with chemicals from wheeled tanks. They promptly ducked for cover, but nobody attacked us.

"Cowed, eh?" exulted Bud. "Well—What's that?"

I heard it, too—gunfire at sea. Bud lifted the ship above the smoke-pall which still blanketed most of the island, and we saw what was happening. The *Stardust*, only a couple of miles off the harbor, was being attacked by a monster.

"Hot damn," gritted Bud. "Here's where we lay another egg. And I hope it's the last."

We slid above the battle, coasting from altitude, the motors just turning. We could both hear and see the struggle. The monster was the wounded one which had had one side of its head blown off.

It was plainly weakened, and seemed to have little sense of direction, for it would make sudden savage rushes at the boat, yeeer away before the negroes' barrage, would lose its intended prey completely and then pick them up again, continually emitting deafening hisses. The vitality of the thing was inconceivable.

Bud's idea was to lure it far enough from the boat to permit us to bomb it without injuring Rattray and his men. He made a pretense of charging it, leap-frogged and hovered so it could follow us with its one eye. Then he put me in position, and I dropped a fifty-pounder which grazed its flank and practically cut it in two. The sharks did the rest.

Bud wagged his wings for the *Star-dust* to follow him, and scooted for the harbor, bringing the ship down on the water off the end of the wharf, to which I made her fast by a bow-line. It wasn't much past noon. In an hour or so we had wrecked an investment of millions.

Bud leaned back, stretching. "Aint nature wonderful?" he grinned. "But aint science grander? Gimme a drink, Terry."

WE stood together on the wharf, and surveyed the smoking hell of Barstow's Island. Then we hauled what remained of our arsenal out of the plane, and rationed it around. The negroes, fortunately, had some grenades left—which they carried in fishnet bags slung from their necks—though they had thrown many of them at the attacking Pycroc. I cast off the amphibian, and she floated clear. Bud was spinning the motors as we advanced cautiously along the wharf toward the shore, spacing ourselves so as to offer as scant a target as possible.

But not a shot was fired. The only sound we heard was the crackling of the flames in the storehouses, stretching from the head of the harbor to the shattered hulk of the barracks. Bodies and parts of bodies were littered over the ground, Nigerians, rats, two or three white men. The gun which had annoyed us lay beside its mount. Undamaged rifles were scattered around, illustrating the panic which had seized the Nigerians. Several of our negroes helped themselves to additional weapons and looted bandoliers of cartridges.

Rattray automatically assumed command. This part of the show was his, and his lantern-jawed face was tense and hard. He strung us in a line from the harbor shore inland, himself three paces in front. Each of the negroes carried a

grenade ready to throw. But still the only opposition we encountered was from the chemical fumes which assailed us at intervals in poisonous gusts.

So we came to the laboratory, a mere shell of what it had been, its white walls charred and blackened, the interior ruby-red. There was almost nothing left of the power-house. Twisted segments of machinery projected through holes in the crumbled walls. And I thought of poor little Lew Starling, who hadn't been ashamed to admit he was a coward, and his dynamos. But it couldn't have been a hard death for him, and I suspected he hadn't met it reluctantly. There was one man safe from Hope's megalomania.

Beyond the power-house the wireless masts loomed stark and voiceless against the sky. Here the shore curved to form the northeastern cape of the harbor. Only a lawn, dotted with shrubbery and dwarf trees—most of them withered by fire and chemical fumes—intervened between us and the stately pile of the Residence and its attendant bungalows.

The grass was charred, and tiny spurts of ashes were stirred by our boots and the tough feet of the negroes. We were halfway across the lawn when we heard a scream, and a deep bass roar that began at a low pitch and rose to a volume resonant rather than loud, vibrant, inexpressibly terrifying. Rattray broke into a trot. "Something up," he called over his shoulder. There was a second scream, ending in a choking gurgle. Voices reached us, frantic, desperate, pleading. A shot sounded behind the Residence.

TWO men burst out the front door as we reached the forecourt. One was Hope, a rifle in his hand. The other was a stocky, broad-shouldered man with a black beard, who wore very thick spectacles. He had a pistol, which he didn't seem to know what to do with.

Hope glared at us. "You, eh? Damn you! I haven't time to bother with you."

"Oh, yes, you will," returned Rattray, covering him. "Where's Miss—"

Hope sneered. "If you want to know, you fool, one of my pets is loose, and is on his way to her."

"I'll go with you," Rattray said.

"A trick, Gerry," I interposed. "Come on, boys," I called to the negroes. And we ran after Hope and the other man around the left wing of the Residence toward the bungalows. There was a quality in Hope's manner which made me discount the possibility of trickery.

The bungalows were scattered irregularly around a second grass court; and as we passed between a pair of them, we saw on the opposite side the most fiendish creature, and the most piteous, I have ever laid my eyes on. It was battering with great gnarled hairy fists at a closed door. A length of chain dangled from its hairy neck—for it was covered with hair like a gorilla, thick, shaggy, brownish. It was naked. Its arms reached to its knees as it whirled at Hope's shout:

"Ganoo! Down, you beast!" By later measurement, it stood two inches less than eight feet high and was almost four feet across the bowed shoulders.

IT stood glowering at us, and Captain Chumley-Jones, next to me, muttered: "Oh, Blessed Jesus, its face!" For its face was almost the face of a man. It made your spine crawl. It invoked a frightened hatred as well as pity. For it plainly belonged neither to humanity nor the beasts, and one look told you it was controlled by the worst instincts of both.

It started to advance slowly upon Hope, dragging the chain behind it.

"Down, Ganoo," he repeated, his voice harshly implacable. His companion exclaimed in German: "Be careful, Herr Doktor! Your rifle." Hope snarled: "I know what I'm doing. Ganoo hates me, but he's afraid when I look him in the eye." He stepped forward steadily toward the monstrous creature.

Ganoo let out another roar. His fists pounded his chest. And I knew what that meant, for I've hunted gorillas. He charged like lightning. Hope calmly leveled his rifle, and fired three times into the creature's chest, but Ganoo came on at undiminished speed. In an instant he had Hope in his arms. And in another instant he had torn his creator limb from limb, and I mean that literally. He stood there, glowering at us, blood dripping from his crooked, hairy fingers, then whirled on Ravich. I put two bullets in his flank, but he finished the Serbian even quicker than he had Mr. Satan.

As Ravich was thrown aside, Rattray fired a burst from the Tommy-gun into the creature. Ganoo leaped at us, roaring and spitting blood. Ah, and then it was that Captain Chumley-Jones did the bravest thing I ever knew a man, black or white, to do. He took a step forward. "Here, Ganoo," he said calmly. "Catch." And releasing the firing-pin of his grenade, he tossed it under-arm to the giant thing. Ganoo paused, instinctively ex-

tended his hands, deftly caught the missile and hugged it to his chest in the animal's gesture—"This is my toy!"

An ear-splitting crash, and Ganoo tottered, glowering at us out of glazing eyes that mirrored now a hint of somber appeal. He tried to roar again, perhaps to speak, I don't know. It ended in a bubbling grunt, and he sagged to the ground dead.

Speaking for myself, I was damnably unnerved. Out of the corner of my eye I saw Rattray racing across the court. I saw the door of the bungalow opening. And I turned to Captain Chumley-Jones. "He'd have got one of us, anyway," I babbled. "Probably two, if it hadn't been for you."

"Oh, no, sar," the negro corrected me courteously. "I said a prayer to the Blessed Lord Jesus, and a Voice told me what to do. If the poor creature had had Christian companionship, he might have become a better man than those demons he destroyed."

What could I say? "It's good to have faith," I mumbled.

"There is no Life without Faith, sar," he assented.

I heard the drone of the amphibian directly overhead, and looked up to wave Bud back to the harbor. Then I saw Rattray emerging from the bungalow with his arm around Ann Parsons, and I went across the court to advise him to make a detour—the local scenery not being particularly pleasant.

SHE was pale and a little weepy, and the way she clung to Rattray's arm told me it wouldn't be long before the King's African Rifles were shy one good officer. She thanked us all fervently, and asked to have the negroes presented to her, which was done in levée style after we had got her around the bungalows to the forecourt of the Residence. We learned from her that the sole remaining occupants of the building were three minor biologists and chemists, and two negro servants, who had taken to the roof after Ganoo broke loose and killed another servant.

Otherwise the island was deserted. Starling had died with his dynamos. The remaining white assistants, and the Nigerians who had remained ashore, had died under our rain of bombs and in the resulting explosions and fires.

I decided that we might as well make a clean sweep of the place, and directed Captain Chumley-Jones and his men to

fetch the five survivors down from the roof, so that Bud could demolish the remaining buildings. But at Ann's suggestion we agreed that he should do as little harm to the bungalows as possible. "Most of Mr. Hope's people weren't really bad," she insisted. "They were unfortunates, and he made them his victims. Please let them have some shelter. It will be difficult enough for them to live until they have an opportunity to leave the island."

CHAPTER VI

WE were sitting in Dempsey's office: Ann Parsons—who wasn't such a bad skirt after she'd got her nerve back—and Gerry, Bud and I. Dempsey was lying back in his chair, his hands behind his head and that mule look in his eyes.

After a while he leaned forward, and picked up the magnifying-glass and looked at the topographical prints again. "You can make 'em out, can't you?" asked Bud.

"Anybody could," he answered, "but I don't know that anybody would believe in 'em."

"Show him Exhibit B, Terry," said Rattray. I pulled that first picture from my pocket, took one look at it and shuddered. I felt the hair rise on my neck the way it had the night we landed in the lagoon, and that awful head had clashed its jaws at the cabin window, and Bud had flashed the searchlight on it and yelled: "Camera, Terry!"

Dempsey didn't need the magnifying-glass for that one. He studied it carefully, eyebrows raised.

"Very interesting," he said, "but they get equally good results in Hollywood. And the Hagenback place at Hamburg has dozens of 'em made out of concrete."

"Are you calling us—" I started.

"Now, see here, Terry," he interrupted, "I'm not calling anybody anything. But I run a reputable newspaper, and when I undertake to stretch popular credulity, I have to have definite, unimpeachable proof. Before the movies got in their dirty work, your evidence might have held good. Not today."

Rattray got redder than I. He stood up.

"Mr. Dempsey," he said, "I hope you'll pardon me if I remark that you have a very suave way of insulting people."

Dempsey just grinned. "Don't lose your goat, Major," he said. "I admire you all for what you did. I wish I'd

been along. But don't forget that I have to think of the great American public. They like to be fooled, but they like to know when they're fooled. Try to sell 'em a yarn like yours, and they'd say: 'Huh, monsters! Antediluvian monsters! I wonder what picture company has bought into the *Dispatch*!' No, fellers, a swell story. But—napoo!"

It was Ann who nodded comprehension of this statement.

"All I ask is to forget," she said, rising. "I want to forget there is such a place as Barstow's Island or that Lipscomb Hope ever lived, or that anybody could have created Pycrocosaurii. As for those rats—" She bit her lip. "Gerry," she cried, "I just can't go to Africa! You'll have to resign your commission. And I'll promise you I'll forget I was a biologist. I don't want to see a laboratory again, inside or out."

Rattray patted her shoulder. "That's a bit of all right, sweetheart," he said. "I'm fed up with soldierin', myself. The place in Hampshire will do for me, with a run over to the States whenever you say the word."

Dempsey put on that infernal papa-knows-best manner of his.

"That's sense, at last," he proclaimed. "I'm glad to have been able to play Cupid, Major, if all else failed. But before you go, what was the damage of this assignment?"

"Oh, I don't know," I answered. "Call it ten grand. Is that all right by you, Bud?" And I explained to Dempsey: "Most of it debits on Bud's ship, of course."

"Sure," Bud agreed.

Dempsey reached for a voucher. "Let nobody hereafter accuse the *Dispatch* of being utterly mercenary in its search for news," he wise-cracked.

AN idea struck me. "Hey, wait a moment," I interposed.

"Well, now, you four-flushing so-and-so," I said, "if I get this report, this story, published, will you agree to double the pot?"

He leaned back, and I knew I had stuck him when I saw the poker-flare in his eyes. "Damned if I won't," he retorted, "if you'll ante back as much for failure."

"Done," I said. "And if I lose, I'll fill your desk with soldier-ants some morning while you're asleep."

"Yah," he jeered, and shoved the voucher at me. "Good luck, fellers."

REAL EXPERIENCES

In this department we print each month the best true stories of personal adventure contributed by our readers. (For details of our true experience contest, see Page 3.) First a famous soldier of fortune tells a deeply interesting story of his service with the Philippine Scouts.



A Head-Hunter Hero

By MAJOR EDWARD (TEX) O'REILLY

EARLY in the spring of 1900, the Philippine scouts were hiking through the mountains of northern Luzon on the trail of the elusive *insurrecto* leader General Tinio.

Of all the weird outfits that I have soldiered with, that bunch of native scouts was the queerest. As originally organized by General Lawton, it had consisted of forty-five soldiers picked from the division, and twenty-six civilian scouts. As it happened, I was the youngest man in the outfit.

Early in our service the experiment was tried of enlisting natives. Our first contingent consisted of thirteen men, and old Sergeant Rojo was the first Filipino enlisted under the American flag. As time went on, the native force was increased, and the white men drifted away, the soldiers back to their regiments, and the civilians on scattered trails.

At the time I speak of, our outfit numbered about two hundred natives and only seven white men. I was detailed as quartermaster sergeant. It was heart-breaking work rounding up the *insurrectos*. Occasionally we would surprise them and have a fight; then they would disappear in the unmapped mountains.

At last we found ourselves in country that had never even been explored by the Spaniards. It was the country of the Tingane Igorrotes, one of the most savage of the head-hunting tribes. It was the American policy to keep peace with the pagan Igorrotes, and we succeeded. On most of our marches we hired these mountaineers as packers, paid them well,

and treated them kindly. If it had not been for their friendliness, our small force could not have operated in that country.

The organized insurgents from the lowlands were their lifelong enemies. Enraged because the Igorrotes assisted the Americans, the rebels sought revenge. Several times roving bands attacked the mountain villages, killed the mountaineers and burned their shacks. It was after one of these reprisals that we first met little Jack, the hero of this story.

WE had camped early one afternoon in a deep valley. Shortly before dark one of the outposts called for the corporal of the guard. In a few minutes he returned with a woebegone prisoner, an Igorrote boy about twelve or thirteen years old, who seemed like a little wild animal, too frightened to run. Through our interpreters we got his tragic story.

His village, consisting of a dozen shacks, had been destroyed by the *insurrectos*. Most of the tribe had been killed, and he had seen his parents shot down. He had escaped into the jungle, and for three days had been wandering alone in the mountains without food. His world was destroyed; his district was surrounded by enemy tribes who would have taken his head without mercy if he wandered into their territory.

All day he had been following us, trying to muster up courage to appeal for help. He had heard that the Americans were friends of the Igorrotes, but we were strange-looking beings, the first

white men he had ever seen. At last, however, hunger had sent him creeping into our lines.

After he had finished questioning the lad, our commander, Captain John Green, called me:

"Sergeant, guess we'll have to take care of this youngster," he said. "Feed him well."

When the little savage found that I was the one who dealt out the grub, he stuck close to my heels. Our expedition continued for several weeks, and then we returned to our headquarters in the town of Santa Maria, in the province of Illocos Norte. By that time the boy had become the mascot of the outfit. Some one nicknamed him Jack, and by that name he was called.

In order to keep him busy, I made him a swamper in the cook shack. He had come to us wearing only a G-string. I managed to outfit him in a khaki uniform three sizes too big for him, and gave him a campaign hat. He became my shadow, following me around all day, and at night slept in a cot at my side. Jack was a bright youngster, and in a few months picked up a strange language all his own, a mixture of English, Spanish and Tagalog. When we went on our hikes after the rebels, he always begged to go along—he wanted to fight the men who had killed his people; but we forced him to stay at headquarters.

LITTLE Jack had been with us about six months when he got his chance to be a soldier. A few weeks before, we had received a detachment of about thirty recruits from the city of Manila. One day Jack came to me quivering with excitement. He had been lying, supposedly asleep, in the barracks near a group of the recruits, and had overheard their conversation:

He declared that they were *insurrectos*, enlisted for the purpose of killing us, and that they were in communication with the rebel chief, General Tinio. We had never had a disloyal man in the scouts; and at first I doubted his story, but he was so frightened and insistent, that I at last believed him.

I took him to Captain Green, and he repeated his story of the plot. The Captain decided to investigate, and we hatched up a plot of our own. One of our most trusted men was Sergeant Belmonte, a Tagalog. We took him into our confidence; Jack again told his tale; and

Belmonte believed him. He had noticed that a group of recruits, the very men Jack named, seemed to keep to themselves, and did not fraternize with the other men.

THAT evening Captain Green called Sergeant Belmonte from the ranks and gave him a tongue-lashing. Before the company he tore the stripes from his sleeve and demoted him to the ranks—a public disgrace. For days Belmonte appeared to brood over the outrage, cursing the whites, and vowing revenge. He took care that his complaints should reach the ears of the suspected men.

They openly sympathized with him, and within a few days took him into their confidence. Sixteen of the detachment of thirty recruits were in the plot. They were rebels who had been sent to Manila with orders to enlist in the scouts and go to Santa Maria. There they had got in touch with General Tinio, hiding in the mountains a few miles away.

It was planned to get all or a majority of the gang on guard some night. Then they were to send a messenger to Tinio and his command. He was to wait in the darkness near the edge of the town. At a signal, the traitors were to slaughter the white men in their bunks, and the *insurrectos* were to rush the barracks and kill the loyal scouts before they could arm. It was a plan that could have succeeded.

We helped them in their scheme; and a couple of days later it was arranged so that all the rebels were on guard. Belmonte, with little Jack as messenger, kept us posted. We knew when the messenger was sent. We gave him time to get out of town, then suddenly surrounded the guard and disarmed them without a shot.

Scouts were sent out to watch for Tinio and his column. They came according to schedule, and were halted in a banana-grove not half a mile from the old church where we were stationed. Silently our loyal scouts were deployed in the darkness. The signal was given, and the *insurrectos* came rushing down the road straight into our trap.

They were a surprised bunch. We had fired a few scattering shots in the barracks to make the rebels believe that the guard was playing its part by shooting the white men. Down the lane they came between the lines of our waiting men; Captain Green gave the signal on his whistle; and the ball opened.

It was a one-sided battle. The enemy broke and retreated, firing back as they ran. We followed, trying to surround them. In the darkness I discovered little Jack running by my side. Somehow he had secured a keen-edged bolo, and was eager to mix in a hand-to-hand fight. The insurgents scattered in the darkness and faded away in the jungle trails. After following them about a mile, we were recalled to the barracks.

In the road we found twelve dead insurgents, and captured nine, mostly wounded. Only two of our men were wounded, slightly. Of the fourteen men who had tried to betray us, three of the leaders were hanged, and the rest sent to Bilibid prison.

Little Jack was the hero of the hour. He had saved our lives, and we wanted to reward him. He stoutly declared that there was only one thing he wanted, and that was to be enlisted in the scouts as a full-fledged soldier. The question of age was waived, and Jack had his wish.

This story has a sequel. Some years later, in 1904, I went to see the World's Fair in St. Louis. One of the exhibits was a Filipino village, and a company of native scouts were stationed there. I

visited the camp, and imagine my delight when I discovered Jack, then a sergeant.

It seemed that when his enlistment papers were made out, no one could pronounce, let alone spell, his Igorrote name; so, because of his friendship for me, he was enlisted as Jack O'Reilly. After this meeting, I occasionally heard from him. He had learned to write English and sent me several letters.

He served for twenty-five years with the scouts, and was retired on the usual pension.

One day some years ago I received a letter in a different handwriting. It enclosed a couple of pages from a Manila magazine, and on one page was a picture of the graduating class of the Igorrote High School at Bontoc. Standing in the front line was a grinning youngster dressed in natty white clothes with a diploma in his hand. Underneath was the caption, "*Felipe O'Reilly, captain of basket-ball team.*" It was the son of Sergeant Jack, the little head-hunter who had come to our camp so long ago.

So it seems that there is a colony of O'Reillys growing up in the head-hunter country of Luzon. However, they do not hail from Ireland.



*A teacher among the Eskimos
tells of his adventures one night
"on the earth's roof-garden."*

By GEORGE
STEPHENS

One Arctic Night

THE romance and mystery of the Arctic called me. I went above the Circle on northern Kotzebue Sound to teach. Here I had the opportunity of exploring the country—and did, as much as my duties permitted. But this time it was young Koyuk's idea. He was always thinking of some hazardous adventure, but this time his proposed plan seemed innocent enough. One day he stopped his dog-team at the school where I was teaching the Eskimo children from the ages of six to eighteen, and in his modest way invited me to spend a night with him out on the ice. The proposition appealed to me, and I readily ac-

cepted. We planned our trip carefully and started one cold Saturday afternoon in early January. It was already dark.

The polar world gleamed that night under a throbbing moon full of green and gold light. The thick sea-ice of midwinter glittered, vanishing into shadows as mysterious as the green dome with its vast jewels of trembling stars of colored light playing over it. A profound silence like death brooded over the sleeping sea, and the voice of man or the howl of a wolf-dog carried far in the stinging Arctic atmosphere.

As we neared the towering ridges our voices came back from the ice-caves to

mock us. The sharp voice of a white fox drew our attention to a distant ridge, where two silhouetted forms moved into the lavender mist along the base. Koyuk now riding on the back runners, pushed the sledge brake into the ice. The dogs stopped and began growling, ending up with a series of long ghastly howls. We walked forward to quiet them; then Koyuk went back to the sledge for his rifle.

"White fox him good sign bear near by. Him follow bear to eat leaving of the kill. You stay here with dogs; I go see beyond ridges." The boy moved toward the high ice.

I stood on the sledge brake, listening to the soft crunch of mukluks on snow. He finally vanished in the shadows. From far away the faint bark of a fox echoed dimly. Off to the right, green fire-tongues of the aurora borealis began trembling in the sapphire mist which hung low over the wilderness. The dogs were now curled in the snow, catching a moment's rest. In a few minutes Koyuk returned.

"We go on past ridges and make camp. I saw bear tracks, and we are in for some fun."

The dogs, on hearing their master's voice, stood up shaking themselves, and turning their heads in readiness for the command. Silver, the lead-dog, was alert to mush on. I rolled on the sledge, and with Koyuk on the back runners giving the signal, the dogs bounded into their collars. The sledge glided easily over the ice with the dogs at a gallop. All about us were fantastic frost-creations as white as alabaster. The sledge tilted suddenly and nearly capsized, when we plunged into some fractured hummocks. A few more corkscrew twists and the sledge slid slowly, crashing into the base of a pinnacle at the foot of an incline. Koyuk jumped from the runners laughing, and I rolled on the ice. The dogs stopped. The nearest ones had their tongues out, and seemed to be amused at the situation; Silver trotted back as far as his harness would allow, to give us an inquiring look.

FROM then on, we were in rough ice continually. The fissures were more numerous; and once the dogs had difficulty in crossing a great crack. It was here at this deep scar that the dogs hit the fresh spoor of a bear, and for a few moments they became wild and ungovernable. They swerved and tried to follow the scent up over a ridge, but

after half of them were up the incline, they began to slide back. The noise was terrific. It seemed if there had been a bear within a mile he would have heard us coming, but we were traveling against the wind. Koyuk talked to the dogs in a friendly tone, and they soon became quiet. Silver seemed ashamed, for it was he who had made the first leap forward, causing the trouble. Some of the frozen harness snapped, and it took us some time to get it spliced. Bare fingers could not be exposed for long in that temperature.

MUSHING on into the rough fields, we crossed crevasse after crevasse. Suddenly the dogs ran onto a snow bridge which gave way under them. Silver and the two dogs just back of him disappeared. The other dogs stopped and braced themselves in the harness. Koyuk's fur-clad figure darted past me, and he soon reached the edge, with me puffing after him. The dogs were held up by the harness, and there they dangled, twisting and clawing between the ice-walls. We caught two of them by their tails, and finally got all three back on the surface again. Silver had cut the toes on his left front foot, and little crimson blotches began to appear on the snow. We were both excited, and Koyuk resorted to the Eskimo tongue almost entirely. I understood him well enough, but answered back in English. A sickening dread crept over me, for after looking down into the shadowy cavern with the dogs yelping, I had a horror of breaking through, and told the boy so. "Me tie long rope around your center and then tie you to the sledge. So you fall in crevasse, you no get lost," he said laughing.

I knew that he was trying to tease me out of my fear. He never failed to encourage me when he realized that my nerves were becoming jumpy. After examining Silver's foot, we tied it up in gauze taken from our first-aid kit, and then put a fur moccasin on it. The dog complained, and showed his dissatisfaction in being treated so. Koyuk moved two old female dogs to the front as substitute leaders, and put Silver on the sledge. When I went to help the boy, Silver jumped from the sledge and followed me, whining, as he limped to his place at the head of the team. Koyuk laughingly caught him.

"Come, boy, you can't work now. These old girls are pretty smart and will

lead us through." The youth talked to Silver and again lifted him back on the sledge, this time near the back so they would be near each other. It was miserably cold, and the tips of my fingers stung with growing coldness. The dogs were hungry and restless. At the moment when we were ready to resume our journey, a low rumbling like distant thunder moved under the ice. The dogs whined and growled. The boy turned his face toward me.

"No be scared—him like that all time—ice no crack."

I did not say anything, but many times since I have heard in my inner ear that dull thunder of Arctic ice.

Silver sat up on his haunches and whined his objections to riding on the sledge. We changed our course so as to miss the crevasse. In a short time we came to some deep drifts at the base of a ridge.

"We make camp here," Koyuk said as we walked over to examine a huge drift.

We took from the sledge two whale-bone snow-knives and began cutting our way into the snowdrift. Instead of making a snow-block igloo as we had done on former expeditions, Koyuk decided that we would hollow out a snow-cave for our shelter. The fresh layer of surface snow two or three inches deep was dug away, and then we cut through the ice-crust into the main drift. We dug the cave about six feet high and eight feet wide and eight feet deep. Koyuk sliced out some blocks to be used finally to build up the front, leaving only a small entrance. When the shelter was at last completed, Koyuk turned his hooded face toward me and said with a good deal of pride:

"That's fine. Now you feedum dogs blubber and fish. Give each dog half salmon and some seal blubber. I make-um hot tea."

THE dogs began to dig themselves in when we stopped, and now they lay curled with their noses under their bushy tails, half buried in the snow. When I began tossing food about, there was a great clamor and gnashing of fangs. The dogs had a ravenous hunger; the ferocity with which they tore into their food was exciting to watch.

While I was feeding the dogs, Koyuk carried our supplies into the cave, and now I could see a flicker of light falling on the ice at the entrance, coming from

the alcohol stove. I got down on my hands and knees and crawled into the friendly cave. Koyuk had removed his heavy traveling parka and was preparing a hot lunch. The icy floor was covered with reindeer skins, and a pot of snow was melting over the alcohol blaze. A blubber lamp flickered in the corner of the cave.

HOW good everything tasted! The hot fat on the reindeer steaks was delicious. We hurried, for it was eleven o'clock, and the bears and foxes would be prowling. In a few moments we were again fully dressed in double parkas, with the blued steel of our rifle barrels shining under our arms. We crawled out into the night, Koyuk leading the limping dog by a seal-gut string. We staked some of the dogs in our shelter, and tied the others near the drift where they could dig in. The aurora borealis was reaching greenish streamers into the sky, and the moon diffused a green mist upon the white silence.

"Let's walk easy and no talk, so bear nor fox can hear us. We just go to the end of this ridge, so we can all time see camp."

We slunk away in the shadows, finally taking our places at the base of a pinnacle. Before us stretched the endless waste. We sat close together on the hard snow crust, snug in our thick reindeer furs. From where we sat we could see our camp. Koyuk feared that a bear might smell the dogs and blubber and mistake them for seals.

We didn't wait long—a dark form moved over the surface a short distance from us, his shadow following him. He was a big fellow, and rambled along in his high-hipped way, sniffing and cuffing the snow with his huge paw. Something cold and creepy twisted up my spine as I watched. But the bear turned suddenly and ran away into the shadows.

Into this solitude there came a soft rumble, followed by a deep growl, and Koyuk pointed to a distant incline from where a bear had just slid down. An Eskimo can see much farther than a white man, and it was some time before I could see the bear clearly. He came dangerously close, in our direction. A frozen wind fanned our faces, and Silver whined from his snow-bed by us; he was still tied. The bear stopped, facing toward the shadows where we were hid, turning his long neck and sniffing. I had a fear that he might make a sudden

plunge into the mist toward us. Koyuk breathed fast, gripping his rifle. The bear continued walking, prowling, sniffing for seal. There were a few moments of tense waiting. Then like a shadow—a bear is anything but clumsy—another bear ran across the ice, and both began to growl. Like two white monsters they hugged each other, rolling on the ice, clawing and roaring.

The bears rolled to their feet, and one chasing the other, disappeared toward the broken ice. Then suddenly a noise of grinding ice, berg against berg, swept by the tide current, clamored over the sea. It sounded like a den of wild animals thirsting for blood. Then, just as a fat young bear came across the ice toward us, the wind of an Arctic storm swooped down upon us.

"Me want him for pair of pants," the boy said, slipping the mitten from trigger hand.

The steel of his rifle gleamed in the moonlight, spitting fire. The bear rose on his hind feet, coming toward us roaring. Two rifles roared simultaneously. The bear rolled on the ice. The eyes of the Eskimo boy shone as he reached me his rifle and took his hunting-knife to slash the bear's throat.

The wind was kicking into a gale. A tremendous slide of snow rushed down an incline. Puffs of powdered snow bogged over us, and parka hoods had to be pulled closer about our faces. I had been holding the lame dog, and now I let him go. He bounded around the bear the best he could, snapping and barking.

"Come, storm him come bad. We stay in cave. She soon blow over," Koyuk said, reaching for his rifle.

Followed by Silver, we hurried as fast as we could move. The snow swept over the pinnacles like ghosts. Once inside the cave, the boy looked at me with a humble plea in his eyes.

"You no feel bad because I shot bear," he said oddly.

I answered in the negative, and said nothing about how I had become excited and shot at the bear too.

We remained in the snow-cave for three hours. It was five o'clock in the morning when, with the bear on the sledge and dogs hitched up, we were ready for the mush homeward. The wind had died to a whisper. The greenish moon hung low, brooding and ghastly. The dogs turned their tails to the wind and dashed off with the wild rush of a pack of wolves.

Always Face

General Christmas gives his subordinate some good advice—afterward.

WAITING for my partner, I sat playing solitaire. The place, Puerto Cortez; time, 1911; setting, the revolution of Manuel Bonilla against the Davilla government.

My partner and I were under orders from General Lee Christmas to make a trip up-country over the little narrow-gauge railroad to see if we could locate the crew who had cut the telegraph-lines and attempted to blow a couple of bridges. The revolution was almost over, all but the shouting and the political settlement; but inability to communicate with the capital might change the complexion of the whole affair, so it was up to us to keep the line open if possible....

Red queen on black king, jack on queen, ten on jack—and that gives me a space. Wonder why the devil Bill don't come along? Train leaves in twenty minutes and we've got to patrol the railroad this morning and try to pick up that wrecking crew of Federals....

I awakened to a confused murmur of voices. Colored lights danced before my eyes, and little imps did cruel things to my head with their tridents. I began to make out the words that were being said around me. They were not friendly words, and desperately I tried to coördinate my brain to my hand; but I didn't have a hand, or if I did it failed to respond, and when my trigger-finger, which I had trained to a point where it could almost think for itself, failed to function, something was radically wrong. What?

Gradually the circles of light changed from blinding bright to blue, then to an opaque screen against which I could see faint images. Then words seemed to click clear and hard on my brain. The voice was that of General Christmas, my commanding officer and friend, but there was anything but friendliness in his tone.

"Take them out and throw them in the bay for the sharks; we won't spoil good soil by burying them."

Sharks—bay? The words refused to make meaning. Who was going to be

An Open Window

By TRACY RICHARDSON



thrown to the sharks? Me? What had I done to be made into fish-bait? A sharp biting pain, and my eyes flew open to a clear sight of what was around me. Doctor Waller stood over me with a needle in his hand, one of those half-round little fellows that they use to sew wounds; he was pulling the needle, and when it got to the height of his chin, I again felt the sharp pain. He grinned into my eyes and queried:

"Hello, Tracy—had a nice trip? Glad to see you back. Just hold still a minute longer, and I'll have you sewed up proper."

Trip? Sewed up? Where had I been? Why was the Doctor sewing on me? I rolled my head to one side and saw rows of bottles on shelves. I tried the other direction, and saw through an open window the waving fronds of coconut trees. Then I saw the scowling face of General Christmas.

"How you feeling, kid? Anything you want?"

"Want? Sure. What's going on here? What happened to me? I was playing cards."

"Yes, you were playing cards, all right; but you darned fool, *you sat with your back to an open window!* Some day you'll learn that open windows and doors are to be faced. You tell him all about it, Doc. I've business to attend to."

Doc didn't know very much about it himself—no one did, it seemed. They had heard a lot of shooting, and rushed in to find my partner Bill standing in the doorway shooting toward the swamp; and on the floor lay five dead men. That is, they thought five of them were dead. Four of them were, very much so; but I was the fifth, and while I was a gory sight, I was far from dead.

Bill had a flesh-wound in the shoulder and had been kicked in the groin. According to the Doctor, I had two bad cuts on the head, from pistol butts, two teeth out, a cut over the bridge of the nose, a left hand smashed and a couple of ribs broken, and several places over my body that would be sore and black

and blue. In short, I had been badly beaten up, without ever knowing a thing about it or having a chance to strike back. But I had the bandages and the pain to prove that the Doctor was right. About all Doc knew for sure, was that Cooper had escaped into the swamps, and Bill had killed his four companions.

A short time before, a quintet had arrived on a sailing-boat from Guatemala. A hard-bitten crew to look at, but in this business of revolutions that was no drawback. They joined the Rebel forces and did their share of the routine duties around the port. They were quiet men, but would fight at the drop of the hat, and they usually dropped the hat themselves. They were not popular, for they had beaten up several of the Foreign Legion.

Only a few days before, over some silly argument, their leader, big Cooper, had tried to beat up a little inoffensive German. He would just about have killed Henry, but my partner Bill interfered and had taken the fight to himself. It was a fight, one that they still talk about down there. Bill won, but he paid for it with many a bruise and torn clothing.

BUT the fight was only incidental. When Bill had taken up the cudgels for little Henry, the other four had started to gang him. I slid my Luger and acted as referee, and the fight was fair. Then we kicked all five of them off the dock and made them swim ashore. If they had been smart and good sports, that would have been the end of it; but right after that, things began to happen, though we never connected them with the fight, until later.

An explosion of a charge of dynamite under the Lagoon trestle failed to wreck it, but caused a lot of worry. Then the telegraph-wires were cut—not only cut, but the poles were chopped down and lengths of wire were carried away. Then the bolt was stolen out of one of the machine-guns, making it useless. Various acts of wire-cutting and sabotage kept things in an uproar, and we were just

about at our wits' end to know who or what was doing the damage, when I got mine, just as I was going out on a patrol trip.

I wasn't hurt very badly. Plenty painful, and I would have to have two teeth fixed up, but I was young and healthy and healed quickly. Bill came to where I was lying on the bar, and looked down at me with a grin on his face. He was one of the best guys I ever knew. I never saw him laugh—just that silent grin. Sometimes his lips would sort of pucker up and a tear come to his eye. I learned to know that sign, and it sure did spell trouble for some one, and Bill could dish it out in quantities that were hard to take.

"What happened?" I asked him.

"I came along and found those five blankety-blanks beating you up. Only thing that saved you was the fact they crowded too much, each one trying to get in the hardest blow. They must have crocked you through the open window. Well, *amigo*, I started shooting. I think I got three of them, but I believe Cooper got the other one. As soon as I barged in, he ran for the swamp, firing back as he ran. He creased me through the shoulder, and I got a kick that hurt like the devil; otherwise, everything is jake."

I went upstairs and got a comfortable chair on the upper veranda. They did not put you in hospitals or coddle you in a Central American revolution; you just had to take it as it came. From the veranda Bill and I could keep a good watch on the swamp where Cooper had disappeared. Christmas had thrown a cordon out on the beach below the swamp and over the trestle at the lagoon. It was possible for Cooper to wade the swamp and make his way to the interior, but very improbable. Sooner or later, we figured, he would have to make his way out to the railway.

PUERTO CORTEZ lies on a spit of land. To the west was the bay; to the east an almost impassable swamp; to the north the ocean, and to the south the lagoon. From the beach to the swamp was at no place more than three hundred yards. The only street was the railway, "*calle lina*" it was called. Along this line all traffic flowed, and the houses and stores were built on each side. It didn't give the man on the run very much leeway. There was not a hundred yards of street, from the docks to the lagoon, that was not covered by some

sharpshooter with a rifle. Christmas had made up his mind that Cooper would not get away.

I kept to my deck-chair on the upper veranda, and as it was the most comfortable thing I could find, I covered up with a mosquito net and spent the night there. Bill and several of the boys were never far away, and Vicente, an old servant of Christmas', spent a lot of time massaging my arm and hand with coconut oil. I was feeling fine but liked to be taken care of.

THE second day of the vigil I was on the veranda, intent on a game of cribbage. Somewhere down the line a rifle-shot rang out, then another. For a few minutes there was silence, but everyone was on the alert. Then another shot. This time there was an answering shot from the edge of the swamp, and Cooper came into sight. Running at full speed, weaving from side to side, throwing a shot now and then as he sped across the tracks and down to the beach. That necessitated a change of front, for the buildings were between us and the fugitive.

And Cooper took full advantage of his opportunity. He seized a native Carib Indian craft, a dugout hollowed from a single log, and propelled by oars and a lugsail. He had simply knocked the two Indians on the head and tossed them out. A minute later the sail was full and the boat was standing down the bay. Cooper stood upright in the canoe, firing his pistol as rapidly as he could reload.

Only those who have witnessed the phenomenon will believe that at times it is impossible to kill a man. Cooper stood there with the courage of desperation, and every man ashore who had a gun was shooting at him. As the craft got more into the open, its speed increased. Bullets raised little fountains around the boat, but it drew away and disappeared around the point, Cooper still standing upright, and according to one party who was using field-glasses, with his thumb to his nose.

Cooper was never seen again, but with him and his crew gone, all trouble along the line ceased. Negotiations with the capital were concluded, and the revolution brought to a successful end. I was up and around, no worse for the assault except a few scars and two false teeth. But even now I always face windows and doors.



The quiet story of an exciting job along the border in the old wild days.

By SERGEANT
IRA ATEN

A Texas Ranger

WE were camped at Camp King, ten miles west of Uvalde on the Nueces River, when orders came to entrain for Cisco. Our train was given the right of way to Cisco, and upon arrival, we were ordered on a forced march south to Brady City, county seat of McCulloch County, where cattle-stealing and brand-burning were raging.

When the cowmen started their round-up in the summer of 1884, the full extent of brand-burning and mavericking first became known. Some ten or twelve cow outfits, each with ten men and ten horses to the man, met on a certain creek to appoint a boss who would designate the round-up ground and direct the circle in order systematically to round up all the cattle in the county. There were few fences in those days, and so the round-up work took in a wide sweep of territory.

One round-up was made each day, and the cow-men would cut out their cattle, put them in a day herd and hold them day and night during the remaining days and take them home when the round-up was over. Generally five or six neighbors in a certain part of the county would own one of the wagons and hold all their cattle together.

On our forced march south from Cisco we passed through Brown County, raging with fence-cutting at that time, but that was too small a job for us, as it was then considered only a misdemeanor. As we crossed the Colorado River a man came galloping down the road toward us. He said there was a big round-up ahead about two miles, and the men were ready to fight.

"If you want to get in on it, you had better hurry up," he added.

The Captain said that was what we were looking for, and put spurs to his horse. We followed.

Arriving at the round-up, we saw about forty men, all heavily armed, lined up against each other about equally divided,

and just about ready to start a real battle. They were cussing one another and hurling accusations from side to side—regular war-talk.

Our Captain rode in between the two factions, saying: "If there is any shooting to be done, men, we will do it."

Our arrival quieted things down a bit, and after much talk and argument, it was agreed they would go on with the round-up, and all burned and maverick brands would be turned over to the Rangers.

A maverick brand is one which is put on large calves or yearlings generally after they have left their mothers and have not as yet been branded, or on dogie calves. A dogie calf is one whose mother has died, or one that got separated from her when it was quite small and has taken care of itself since that time. This is the class of cattle on which maverick brands were placed.

HOWEVER, many large calves were taken from their mothers, kept in pens for a week or ten days, and then a maverick brand would be put on them and they were turned out. Sometimes these calves would find their way back to their mothers, and then the trouble would begin. The owner of the cow generally went gunning for the owner of the maverick brand. Of course, he couldn't be found.

Inside of a year or so some man would pop up with a bill-of-sale for this maverick brand, bought from some one who never existed. There might be twenty-five, fifty or a hundred cattle in this brand, and ten or fifteen maverick brands in the range of one county. So you see it made quite a profitable business if a person could get away with it; and many did in the early days in western Texas. The man with the bill-of-sale didn't fool anybody very much, for he was nearly always pointed out as the thief, and had

a hard job to clear himself in the minds of honest cow-men. A burned brand is one that is burned over another brand to make something else out of the original figures or letters, or it was one that was burned so badly that it was hard to make anything definite out of it at all—just a blotch. However, by killing the cow and skinning her, it was almost always possible to make out the original brand, which would be imprinted on the fleshy side of the hide. . . . These activities present one picture of the cattle business in the West in the '80's, but, it must be remembered, it had its better and honest side as well.

For four weeks we went around with the round-ups and all burned and maverick brands and other brands that appeared suspicious, were turned over to the Rangers. We had some job on our hands! At the close of the round-up we had some five or six hundred head of cattle under our charge, and plenty of argument was in store for us from parties claiming some of the suspicious-looking stock. However, our side of the argument generally prevailed, particularly as it would be backed up by about twenty armed men. These cattle were advertised and sold, and the money paid for them went into the county treasury. Many rustlers lost a whole winter's work—and whined mightily.

We arrested several of the better-known cattle-rustlers, but in those days it was nearly impossible to get a conviction for cattle-stealing in the West.

IN Brady City, during those early days, the only place where a man could get a shave was in a blacksmith shop. I took on one of these one day and every time I think of it I rub my hand over my face. There is a well-known old saying that only two kinds of men go to hell: One is a lawyer, the other a blacksmith who hammers cold iron. I think this one was in that class.

After this round-up was finished we went to Menard County and camped at Peg Leg crossing on the San Saba River. The stage came through there twice each day, and had been held up by bandits nine times. We camped at the crossing for some time, and when it became apparent that the stage would not be robbed while we were there, we moved on up near Menardville. The stage was never again robbed at Peg Leg Crossing on the San Saba.

In 1885 we had occasion to make a forced night ride of sixty-five miles from Uvalde to Carrigo Springs, Dimmit County, near the Rio Grande. This was in answer to an urgent appeal for help by the citizens of Dimmit County living between Eagle Pass and Laredo. About sundown one evening, a man rode into our camp on the Leona River, his horse spent. He told us of Mexican bandits who had crossed the Rio Grande, driving off cattle, after killing their herdsman.

BEFORE daylight we rode into Carrigo Springs, expecting to find the town besieged by Mexicans. We sent two of our men into the town to reconnoiter and find out what the situation was. On their return they reported that not a light could be seen nor a man found. We then rode into the town, took charge of the county courthouse, and went to sleep.

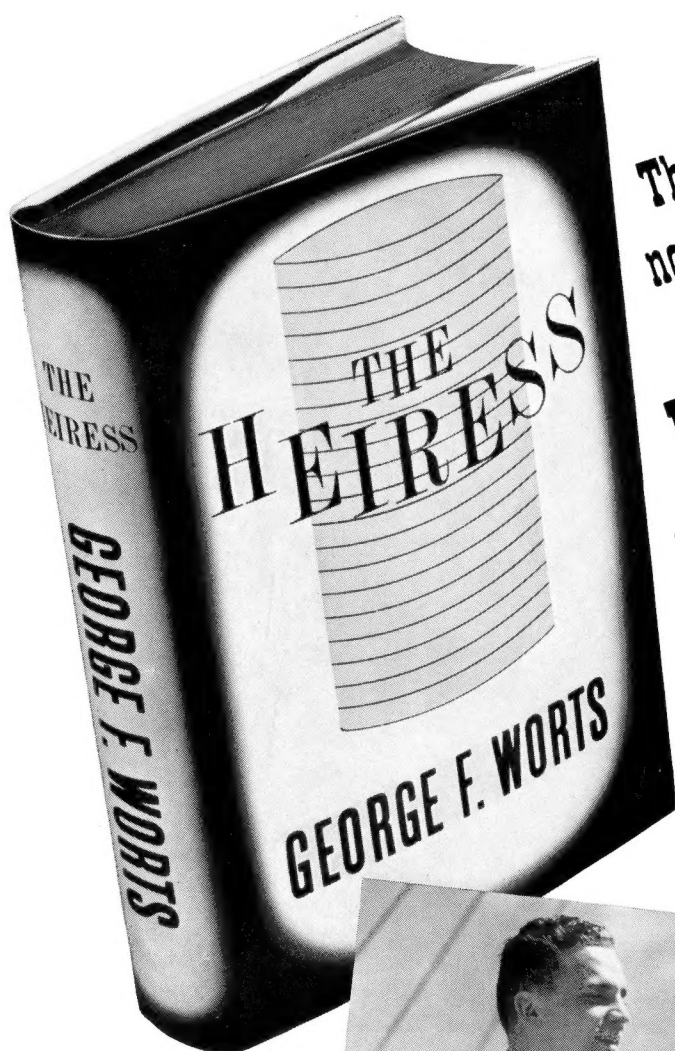
A call had also been sent to Captain Lee Hall and Captain Charley McKinney of Cotulla, two old, tried and hardened ex-Ranger captains of many years' service. They arrived soon after daybreak. After a rest of a few hours we proceeded, some forty of us, to a certain crossing on the Rio Grande near the Springs. To our surprise, we found about the same number of Mexicans lined up on the opposite bank of the river.

After much parleying, we agreed to exchange notes on the situation. This was done by having a man from each side ride into the middle of the stream carrying a white flag, a handkerchief, tied to the muzzle of his carbine. The rifle was held high above his head. Meeting in the middle of the river, each rider would exchange notes and return.

After several exchanges of these notes a peace treaty was agreed upon, and five members of each party were to ride to the middle of the river, still under the white flag of truce, to sign the treaty. While our representatives rode into the river to sign this treaty, the remainder of the troop lay in the brush ready for action should any trickery develop. The water ran high up on our horses' sides, filling our boots with water.

The treaty was signed, and as far as I know, this is the only such peace document to be signed in midstream of the Rio Grande between the United States and Mexico. I might add that thereafter peace and quiet reigned in Dimmit County and the territory in Mexico just across the river.

Further of these authentic chronicles of the Old West will appear in an early issue.



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fun?

SURE IT IS

—and mighty strenuous too!

"SPORT, even for the fun of it, can be tense and tiring," says Miss Gloria Wheeden, who is shown aquaplaning above and at left. "Like most of the folks who go in for water sports, I pride myself on my physical condition. Yes, I smoke. When I feel a bit let-down, I light up a Camel and get a 'lift' in energy." When an active day drains physical and nervous energy, Camels help you renew your flow of vim. And being mild, they never get on your nerves.

"MANY A TIME I've smoked a Camel to get a 'lift,'" says Harry Burmester printer, (left). "With Camels handy, I feel I can take the tough spots right in stride. Camels never tire my taste or irritate my throat—even smoking as much as I do."

1060 PARACHUTE JUMPS—no mishaps! Floyd Stimson (right) started smoking Camels at his first parachute jump. "Camels are so mild I take healthy nerves for granted," says Floyd. "I've found what I want in Camels. Mildness — tastiness."

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